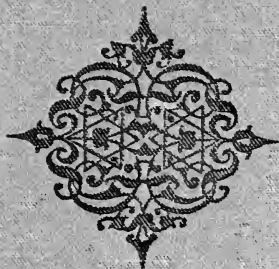


# ZUT

*AND OTHER PARISIANS*



GUY WETMORE CARRYL



THE LIBRARY  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CALIFORNIA

Rare Books

GIFT OF

John W. McConnell

Early 1900s

*The Bancroft Library*

University of California • Berkeley

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



**By Guy Wetmore Carrpl.**

---

THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR. Crown  
8vo, \$1.50.

ZUT, AND OTHER PARISIANS. Crown  
8vo, \$1.50.

GRIMM TALES MADE GAY. Illustrated  
by ALBERT LEVERING. Square crown  
8vo, \$1.50, *net*. Postpaid, \$1.62.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY,  
BOSTON AND NEW YORK.

GUY WETMORE CARRYL

---

# Zut

AND OTHER PARISIANS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press, Cambridge*

1908

*Copyright 1903 by Guy Wetmore Carryl*  
*All rights reserved*

*Published September, 1903*

THIRD IMPRESSION — REPRINTED JANUARY, 1908





A

C. F. G.

*Mon cher ami :*

*En souvenir de maints beaux jours dont tu as partagé l'allégresse : en attendant d'autres à venir : de ceux-là encore dont tu as adouci la souffrance et l'ennui : par reconnaissance de conseils qu'on n'oublie jamais et de prévoyances dont on se souvient toujours : je te dédie les contes suivants. Tu y retrouveras beaucoup d'amis et peut-être autant d'inconnus : tu les accueilleras assurément, les uns et les autres, avec cette belle hospitalité qui ne s'est jamais démentie, et qui m'a rendu et me rendra encore — espérons-le ! — ton obligé et reconnaissant*

G. W. C.



# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
ZUT . . . . .	3 —
CAFFIARD, <i>Deus ex Machina</i> . . . . .	28 —
THE NEXT CORNER . . . . .	56 —
THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER . . . . .	84
THE TUITION OF DODO CHAPUIS . . . . .	109
LE POCHARD . . . . .	138
A LATTER-DAY LUCIFER . . . . .	161
POIRE ! . . . . .	190
PAPA LABESSE . . . . .	215
IN THE ABSENCE OF MONSIEUR . . . . .	245 —
LITTLE TAPIN . . . . .	275



# Zut

*AND OTHER PARISIANS*





## Z u t

SIDE by side, on the avenue de la Grande Armée, stand the épicerie of Jean-Baptiste Caille and the salle de coiffure of Hippolyte Sergeot, and between these two there is a great gulf fixed, the which has come to be through the acerbity of Alexandrine Caille (according to Espérance Sergeot), through the duplicity of Espérance Sergeot (according to Alexandrine Caille). But the veritable root of all evil is Zut, and Zut sits smiling in Jean-Baptiste's doorway, and cares naught for anything in the world, save the sunlight and her midday meal.

When Hippolyte found himself in a position to purchase the *salle de coiffure*, he gave evidence of marked acumen by uniting himself in the holy — and civil — bonds of matrimony with the retiring patron's daughter, whose dot ran into the coveted five figures, and whose heart, said Hippolyte, was as good as her face was pretty, which, even by the unprejudiced, was acknowledged to be forcible commendation. The installation of the new establishment was a nine days' wonder in the quartier. It is a busy thoroughfare at its western end, is the *avenue de la Grande Armée*, crowded with bicyclists and with a multitude of creatures fearfully and wonderfully clad, who do incomprehensible things in connection with motor-carriages. Also there are big *cafés* in plenty, whose waiters must be smoothly shaven: and moreover, at the time when Hippolyte came into his own, the *porte Maillot* station of the *Métropolitain* had already pushed its *entrée* and *sortie* up through the soil, not a hundred metres from his door, where they stood like atrocious yellow tulips, *art nouveau*, breathing people out and in by thousands. There was no lack of possible custom. The problem was to turn possible into



probable, and probable into permanent ; and here the seven wits and the ten thousand francs of *Espérance* came prominently to the fore. She it was who sounded the progressive note, which is half the secret of success.

"Pour attirer les gens," she said, with her arms akimbo, "il faut d'abord les épater."

In her creed all that was worth doing at all was worth doing gloriously. So, under her guidance, Hippolyte journeyed from shop to shop in the faubourg St. Antoine, and spent hours of impassioned argument with carpenters and decorators. In the end, the *salle de coiffure* was glorified by fresh paint without and within, and by the addition of a long mirror in a gilt frame, and a complicated apparatus of gleaming nickel-plate, which went by the imposing title of *appareil antiseptique*, and the acquisition of which was duly proclaimed by a special placard that swung at right angles to the door. The shop was rechristened, too, and the black and white sign across its front which formerly bore the simple inscription "*Kilbert, Coiffeur*," now blazoned abroad the vastly more impressive legend "*Salon Malakoff*." The window shelves fairly groaned beneath

their burden of soaps, toilet waters, and perfumery, a string of bright yellow sponges occupied each corner of the window, and, through the agency of white enamel letters on the pane itself, public attention was drawn to the apparently contradictory facts that English was spoken and "schampoing" given within. Then Hippolyte engaged two assistants, and clad them in white duck jackets, and his wife fabricated a new blouse of blue silk, and seated herself behind the desk with an engaging smile. The enterprise was fairly launched, and experience was not slow in proving the theories of Espérance to be well founded. The quartier was épaté from the start, and took with enthusiasm the bait held forth. The affairs of the Salon Malakoff prospered prodigiously.

But there is a serpent in every Eden, and in that of the Sergeant this rôle was assumed by Alexandrine Caille. The worthy épicier himself was of too torpid a temperament to fall a victim to the gnawing tooth of envy, but in the soul of his wife the launch, and, what was worse, the immediate prosperity of the Salon Malakoff, bred dire resentment. Her own establishment had grown grimy with the

passage of time, and the annual profits displayed a constant and disturbing tendency toward complete evaporation, since the coming of the big cafés, and the resultant subversion of custom to the wholesale dealers. This persistent narrowing of the former appreciable gap between purchase and selling price rankled in Alexandrine's mind, but her misguided efforts to maintain the percentage of profit by recourse to inferior qualities only made bad worse, and, even as the Sergeot were steering the Salon Malakoff forth upon the waters of prosperity, there were nightly conferences in the household next door, at which impending ruin presided, and exasperation sounded the keynote of every sentence. The resplendent façade of Hippolyte's establishment, the tide of custom which poured into and out of his door, the loudly expressed admiration of his ability and thrift, which greeted her ears on every side, and, finally, the sight of Espérance, fresh, smiling, and prosperous, behind her little counter, — all these were as gall and wormwood to Alexandrine, brooding over her accumulating debts and her decreasing earnings, among her dusty stacks of jars and boxes.

Once she had called upon her neighbor, somewhat for courtesy's sake, but more for curiosity's, and since then the agreeable scent of violet and lilac perfumery dwelt always in her memory, and mirages of scrupulously polished nickel and glass hung always before her eyes. The air of her own shop was heavy with the pungent odors of raw vegetables, cheeses, and dried fish, and no brilliance redeemed the sardine and biscuit boxes which surrounded her. Life became a bitter thing to Alexandrine Caille, for if nothing is more gratifying than one's own success, surely nothing is less so than that of one's neighbor. Moreover, her visit had never been returned, and this again was fuel for her rage.

But the sharpest thorn in her flesh — and even in that of her phlegmatic husband — was the base desertion to the enemy's camp of Abel Flique. In the days when Madame Caille was unmarried, and when her ninety kilos were fifty still, Abel had been youngest commis in the very shop over which she now held sway, and the most devoted suitor in all her train. Even after his prowess in the black days of '71 had won him the attention of the

civil authorities, and a grateful municipality had transformed the grocer-soldier into a guardian of law and order, he still hung upon the favor of his heart's first love, and only gave up the struggle when Jean-Baptiste bore off the prize and enthroned her in state as presiding genius of his newly acquired *épicerie*. Later, an unwittingly kindly prefect had transferred Abel to the seventeenth *arrondissement*, and so the old friendship was picked up where it had been dropped, and the ruddy-faced agent found it both convenient and agreeable to drop in frequently at Madame Caille's on his way home, and exchange a few words of reminiscence or banter for a box of sardines or a minute package of tea. But, with the deterioration in his old friends' wares, and the almost simultaneous appearance of the Salon Malakoff, his loyalty wavered. Flique sampled the advantages of Hippolyte's establishment, and, being won over thereby, returned again and again. His hearty laugh came to be heard almost daily in the *salle de coiffure*, and because he was a brave *homme* and a good customer, who did not stand upon a question of a few *sous*, but allowed Hippolyte to work his will, and

trim and curl and perfume him to his heart's content, there was always a welcome for him, and a smile from Madame Sergeot, and occasionally a little present of brillantine or perfumery, for friendship's sake, and because it is well to have the good-will of the all-powerful police.

From her window Madame Caille observed the comings and goings of Abel with a resentful eye. It was rarely now that he glanced into the *épicerie* as he passed, and still more rarely that he greeted his former flame with a stiff nod. Once she had hailed him from the doorway, sardines in hand, but he had replied that he was pressed for time, and had passed rapidly on. Then indeed did blackness descend upon the soul of Alexandrine, and in her deepest consciousness she vowed to have revenge. Neither the occasion nor the method was as yet clear to her, but she pursed her lips ominously, and bided her time.

In the existence of Madame Caille there was one emphatic consolation for all misfortunes, the which was none other than Zut, a white angora cat of surpassing beauty and prodigious size. She had come into Alexandrine's pos-

session as a kitten, and, what with much eating and an inherent distaste for exercise, had attained her present proportions and her superb air of unconcern. It was from the latter that she derived her name, the which, in Parisian argot, at once means everything and nothing, but is chiefly taken to signify complete and magnificent indifference to all things mundane and material: and in the matter of indifference Zut was past-mistress. Even for Madame Caille herself, who fed her with the choicest morsels from her own plate, brushed her fine fur with excessive care, and addressed caressing remarks to her at minute intervals throughout the day, Zut manifested a lack of interest that amounted to contempt. As she basked in the warm sun at the shop door, the round face of her mistress beamed upon her from the little desk, and the voice of her mistress sent fulsome flattery winging toward her on the heavy air. Was she beautiful, *mon Dieu*! In effect, all that one could dream of the most beautiful! And her eyes, of a blue like the heaven, were they not wise and calm? *Mon Dieu*, yes! It was a cat among thousands, a *mimi* almost divine.

Jean-Baptiste, appealed to for confirmation of these statements, replied that it was so. There was no denying that this was a magnificent beast. And of a chic. And caressing — (which was exaggeration). And of an affection — (which was doubtful). And courageous — (which was wholly untrue.) Mazette, yes! A cat of cats! And was the boy to be the whole afternoon in delivering a cheese, he demanded of her? And Madame Caille would challenge him to ask her that — but it was a good, great beast all the same! — and so bury herself again in her accounts, until her attention was once more drawn to Zut, and fresh flattery poured forth. For all of this Zut cared less than nothing. In the midst of her mistress's sweetest cajolery, she simply closed her sapphire eyes, with an inexpressibly eloquent air of weariness, or turned to the intricacies of her toilet, as who should say: "Continue. I am listening. But it is unimportant."

But long familiarity with her disdain had deprived it of any sting, so far as Alexandrine was concerned. Passive indifference she could suffer. It was only when Zut proceeded to an active manifestation of ingratitude that she



inflicted an irremediable wound. Returning from her marketing one morning, Madame Caille discovered her graceless favorite seated complacently in the doorway of the Salon Malakoff, and, in a paroxysm of indignation, bore down upon her, and snatched her to her breast.

“Unhappy one!” she cried, planting herself in full view of *Espérance*, and, while raining the letter of her reproach upon the truant, contriving to apply its spirit wholly to her neighbor. “What hast thou done? Is it that thou desertest me for strangers, who may destroy thee? Name of a name, hast thou no heart? They would steal thee from me — and above all, *now*! Well then, no! One shall see if such things are permitted! *Vagabond*!” And with this parting shot, which passed harmlessly over the head of the offender, and launched itself full at Madame Sergeant, the outraged *épicière* flounced back into her own domain, where, turning, she threatened the empty air with a passionate gesture.

“*Vagabond*!” she repeated. “Good-for-nothing! Is it not enough to have robbed me of my friends, that you must steal my child as

well? We shall see!" — then, suddenly softening — "Thou art beautiful, and good, and wise. Mon Dieu, if I should lose thee, and above all, *now!*"

Now there existed a marked, if unvoiced, community of feeling between Espérance and her resentful neighbor, for the former's passion for cats was more consuming even than the latter's. She had long cherished the dream of possessing a white angora, and when, that morning, of her own accord, Zut stepped into the Salon Malakoff, she was received with demonstrations even warmer than those to which she had long since become accustomed. And, whether it was the novelty of her surroundings, or merely some unwonted instinct which made her unusually susceptible, her habitual indifference then and there gave place to animation, and her satisfaction was vented in her long, appreciative purr, wherewith it was not once a year that she vouchsafed to gladden her owner's heart. Espérance hastened to prepare a saucer of milk, and, when this was exhausted, added a generous portion of fish, and Zut then made a tour of the shop, rubbing herself against the chair-legs, and receiving the homage of cus-

tomers and duck-clad assistants alike. Flique, his ruddy face screwed into a mere knot of features, as Hippolyte worked violet hair-tonic into his brittle locks, was moved to satire by the apparition.

“Tiens! It is with the cat as with the clients. All the world forsakes the Caille.”

Strangely enough, the wrathful words of Alexandrine, as she snatched her darling from the doorway, awoke in the mind of Espérance her first suspicion of this smouldering resentment. Absorbed in the launching of her husband's affairs, and constantly employed in the making of change and with the keeping of her simple accounts, she had had no time to bestow upon her neighbors, and, even had her attention been free, she could hardly have been expected to deduce the rancor of Madame Caille from the evidence at hand. But even if she had been able to ignore the significance of that furious outburst at her very door, its meaning had not been lost upon the others, and her own half-formed conviction was speedily confirmed.

“What has she?” cried Hippolyte, pausing in the final stage of his operations upon the highly perfumed Flique.

"Do I know?" replied his wife with a shrug. "She thinks I stole her cat — *I!*"

"Quite simply, she hates you," put in Flique. "And why not? She is old, and fat, and her business is taking itself off, like that! You are young and" — with a bow, as he rose — "beautiful, and your affairs march to a marvel. She is jealous, *c'est tout!* It is a bad character, that."

"But, *mon Dieu!*" —

"But what does that say to you? Let her go her way, she and her cat. *Au r'voir, 'sieurs, 'dame.*"

And, rattling a couple of sous into the little urn reserved for tips, the policeman took his departure, amid a chorus of "*Merci, m'sieu', au r'voir, m'sieu',*" from Hippolyte and his duck-clad aids.

But what he had said remained behind. All day Madame Sergeot pondered upon the incident of the morning and Abel Flique's comments thereupon, seeking out some more plausible reason for this hitherto unsuspected enmity than the mere contrast between her material conditions and those of Madame Caille seemed to her to afford. For, to a natural placidity of

temperament, which manifested itself in a reluctance to incur the displeasure of any one, had been lately added in Espérance a shrewd commercial instinct, which told her that the fortunes of the Salon Malakoff might readily be imperiled by an unfriendly tongue. In the quartier, gossip spread quickly and took deep root. It was quite imaginably within the power of Madame Caille to circulate such rumors of Sergeant dishonesty as should draw their lately won custom from them and leave but empty chairs and discontent where now all was prosperity and satisfaction.

Suddenly there came to her the memory of that visit which she had never returned. Mon Dieu ! and was not that reason enough ? She, the youngest patronne in the quartier, to ignore deliberately the friendly call of a neighbor ! At least it was not too late to make amends. So, when business lagged a little in the late afternoon, Madame Sergeant slipped from her desk, and, after a furtive touch to her hair, went in next door to pour oil upon the troubled waters.

Madame Caille, throned at her counter, received her visitor with unexampled frigidity.

"Ah, it is you," she said. "You have come to make some purchases, no doubt."

"Eggs, madame," answered her visitor, disconcerted, but tactfully accepting the hint.

"The best quality — or — ?" demanded Alexandrine, with the suggestion of a sneer.

"The best, evidently, madame. Six, if you please. Spring weather at last, it would seem."

To this generality the other made no reply. Descending from her stool, she blew sharply into a small paper bag, thereby distending it into a miniature balloon, and began selecting the eggs from a basket, holding each one to the light, and then dusting it with exaggerated care before placing it in the bag. While she was thus employed Zut advanced from a secluded corner, and, stretching her fore legs slowly to their utmost length, greeted her acquaintance of the morning with a yawn. Finding in the cat an outlet for her embarrassment, Espérance made another effort to give the interview a friendly turn.

"He is beautiful, madame, your matou," she said.

"It is a female," replied Madame Caille,

turning abruptly from the basket, "and she does not care for strangers."

This second snub was not calculated to encourage neighborly overtures, but Madame Sergeot had felt herself to be in the wrong, and was not to be so readily repulsed.

"We do not see Monsieur Caille at the Salon Malakoff," she continued. "We should be enchanted" —

"My husband shaves himself," retorted Alexandrine, with renewed dignity.

"But his hair" — ventured Espérance.

"*I* cut it!" thundered her foe.

Here Madame Sergeot made a false move. She laughed. Then, in confusion, and striving, too late, to retrieve herself — "Pardon, madame," she added, "but it seems droll to me, that. After all, ten sous is a sum so small" —

"All the world, unfortunately," broke in Madame Caille, "has not the wherewithal to buy mirrors, and pay itself frescoes and appareils antiseptiques! The eggs are twenty-four sous — but we do not pride ourselves upon our eggs. Perhaps you had better seek them elsewhere for the future!"

For sole reply Madame Sergeot had recourse to her expressive shrug, and then laying two francs upon the counter, and gathering up the sous which Alexandrine rather hurled at than handed her, she took her way toward the door with all the dignity at her command. But Madame Caille, feeling her snub to have been insufficient, could not let her go without a final thrust.

“Perhaps your husband will be so amiable as to shampoo my cat!” she shouted. “She seems to like your ‘Salon’!”

But Espérance, while for concord’s sake inclined to tolerate all rudeness to herself, was not prepared to hear Hippolyte insulted, and so, wheeling at the doorway, flung all her resentment into two words.

“Mal élevée!”

“Gueuse!” screamed Alexandrine from the desk. And so they parted.

Now, even at this stage, an armed truce might still have been preserved, had Zut been content with the evil she had wrought, and not thought it incumbent upon her further to embitter a quarrel that was a very pretty quarrel as it stood. But, whether it was that the



.....

milk and fish of the Salon Malakoff lay sweeter upon her memory than any of the familiar dainties of the épicerie Caille, or that, by her unknowable feline instinct, she was irresistibly drawn toward the scent of violet and lilac brillantine, her first visit to the Sergeot was soon repeated, and from this visit other visits grew, until it was almost a daily occurrence for her to saunter slowly into the *salle de coiffure*, and there receive the food and homage which were rendered as her undisputed due. For, whatever was the bitterness of *Es-pérance* toward Madame Caille, no part thereof descended upon Zut. On the contrary, at each visit her heart was more drawn toward the sleek angora, and her desire but strengthened to possess her peer. But white angoras are a luxury, and an expensive one at that, and, however prosperous the Salon Malakoff might be, its proprietors were not as yet in a position to squander eighty francs upon a whim. So, until profits should mount higher, Madame Sergeot was forced to content herself with the voluntary visits of her neighbor's pet.

Madame Caille did not yield her rights of sovereignty without a struggle. On the occa-

sion of Zut's third visit, she descended upon the Salon Malakoff, robed in wrath, and found the adored one contentedly feeding on fish in the very bosom of the family Sergeant. An appalling scene ensued.

"If," she stormed, crimson of countenance, and threatening Espérance with her fist, "if you *must* entice my cat from her home, at *least* I will thank you not to give her food. I provide all that is necessary ; and, for the rest, how do I know what is in that saucer ? "

And she surveyed the duck-clad assistants and the astounded customers with tremendous scorn.

"You others," she added, "I ask you, is it just ? These people take my cat, and feed her — *feed* her — with I know not what ! It is overwhelming, unheard of — and, above all, *now* ! "

But here the peaceful Hippolyte played trumps.

"It is the privilege of the vulgar," he cried, advancing, razor in hand, "when they are at home, to insult their neighbors, but here — no ! My wife has told me of you and of your sayings. Beware ! or I shall arrange your affair for you ! Go ! you and your cat ! "

And, by way of emphasis, he fairly kicked Zut into her astonished owner's arms. He was magnificent, was Hippolyte !

This anecdote, duly elaborated, was poured into the ears of Abel Flique an hour later, and that evening he paid his first visit in many months to Madame Caille. She greeted him effusively, being willing to pardon all the past for the sake of regaining this powerful friend. But the glitter in the agent's eye would have cowed a fiercer spirit than hers.

"You amuse yourself," he said sternly, looking straight at her over the handful of raisins which she tendered him, "by wearying my friends. I counsel you to take care. One does not sell inferior eggs in Paris without hearing of it sooner or later. I know more than I have told, but not more than I *can* tell, if I choose."

"Our ancient friendship" — faltered Alexandrine, touched in a vulnerable spot.

"— preserves you thus far," added Flique, no less unmoved. "Beware how you abuse it !"

And so the calls of Zut were no longer disturbed.

But the rover spirit is progressive, and thus short visits became long visits, and finally the angora spent whole nights in the Salon Malakoff, where a box and a bit of carpet were provided for her. And one fateful morning the meaning of Madame Caille's significant words "and above all, *now!*" was made clear.

The prosperity of Hippolyte's establishment had grown apace, so that, on the morning in question, the three chairs were occupied, and yet other customers awaited their turn. The air was laden with violet and lilac. A stout chauffeur, in a leather suit, thickly coated with dust, was undergoing a shampoo at the hands of one of the duck-clad, and, under the skillfully plied razor of the other, the virgin down slid from the lips and chin of a slim and somewhat startled youth, while from a vaporizer Hippolyte played a fine spray of perfumed water upon the ruddy countenance of Abel Flique. It was an eloquent moment, eminently fitted for some dramatic incident, and that dramatic incident Zut supplied. She advanced slowly and with an air of conscious dignity from the corner where was her carpeted box, and in her mouth was a limp something,

which, when deposited in the immediate centre of the Salon Malakoff, resolved itself into an angora kitten, as white as snow !

“Epatant !” said Flique, mopping his perfumed chin. And so it was.

There was an immediate investigation of Zut’s quarters, which revealed four other kittens, but each of these was marked with black or tan. It was the flower of the flock with which the proud mother had won her public.

“And they are all yours !” cried Flique, when the question of ownership arose. “Mon Dieu, yes ! There was such a case not a month ago, in the eighth arrondissement — a concierge of the avenue Hoche who made a contrary claim. But the courts decided against her. They are all yours, Madame Sergeot. My felicitations !”

Now, as we have said, Madame Sergeot was of a placid temperament which sought not strife. But the unprovoked insults of Madame Caille had struck deep, and, after all, she was but human.

So it was that, seated at her little desk, she composed the following masterpiece of satire :

CHÈRE MADAME, — We send you back your cat, and the others — all but one. One kitten was of a pure white, more beautiful even than its mother. As we have long desired a white angora, we keep this one as a souvenir of you. We regret that we do not see the means of accepting the kind offer you were so amiable as to make us. We fear that we shall not find time to shampoo your cat, as we shall be so busy taking care of our own. Monsieur Flique will explain the rest.

• We pray you to accept, madame, the assurance of our distinguished consideration,

HIPPOLYTE AND ESPÉRANCE SERGEOT.

It was Abel Flique who conveyed the above epistle, and Zut, and four of Zut's kittens, to Alexandrine Caille, and, when that wrathful person would have rent him with tooth and nail, it was Abel Flique who laid his finger on his lip, and said, —

“Concern yourself with the superior kitten, madame, and I concern myself with the inferior eggs !”

To which Alexandrine made no reply. After Flique had taken his departure, she remained

---

speechless for five consecutive minutes for the first time in the whole of her waking existence, gazing at the spot at her feet where sprawled the white angora, surrounded by her mottled offspring. Even when the first shock of her defeat had passed, she simply heaved a deep sigh, and uttered two words, —

“Oh, *Zut!*”

The which, in Parisian argot, at once means everything and nothing.



# Caffiard

## DEUS EX MACHINA

THE studio was tucked away in the extreme upper northeast corner of 13 ter rue Visconti, higher even than that cinquième, dearly beloved of the impecunious, and of whoso, between stairs and street odors, chooses the lesser evil, and is more careful of lungs than legs. After the six long flights had been achieved, around a sharp corner and up a little winding stairway, was the door which bore the name of Pierre Vauquelin. Inside, after stumbling along a narrow hall, as black as Erebus, and floundering through a curtained



doorway, one came abruptly into the studio, and, in all probability, fell headlong over a little rattan stool, or an easel, or a box of paints, and was picked up by the host, and dusted, and put to rights, and made much of, like a bumped child. Thus restored to equanimity one was better able to appreciate what Pierre called *la Boîte*.

The Box was a room eight metres in width by ten in length, with a skylight above, and a great, square window in the north wall, which latter sloped inward from floor to ceiling, by reason of the mansarde roof. Of what might be called furniture there was but little, a Norman cupboard of black wood, heavily carved, a long divan, contrived from various packing boxes and well-worn rugs, a large, square table, a half dozen chairs, three easels, and a repulsive little stove with an interminable pipe, which, with its many twists and turns, gave one the impression of a thick, black snake, that had, a moment before, been swaying about in the room, and had suddenly found a hole in the roof through which to thrust its head.

But of minor things the Box was full to overflowing. The Norman cupboard was crammed

with an assortment of crockery, much of it sadly nicked and cracked, the divan was strewn with boxes of broken pastels, paint-brushes, and palettes coated with dried colors, the table littered with papers, sketches, and books, and every chair had its own particular trap for the unwary, in the form of thumb-tacks or a glass half full of cloudy water : and in the midst of this chaos, late on a certain mid-May afternoon, stood the painter himself, with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his corduroy trousers, and his back turned upon the portrait upon which he had been at work. It was evident that something untoward was in the air, because Pierre, who always smoked, was not smoking, and Pierre, who never scowled, was scowling.

In the Quartier — that Quartier which alone, of them all, is spelt with a capital Q — there was, in ordinary, no gayer, more happy-go-lucky type than this same Pierre. He lived, as did a thousand of his kind, on eighty sous a day (there were those who lived on less, pardi !), and breakfasted, and dined, at that, — yes, and paid himself an absinthe at the Deux Magots at six o'clock, and a package of green

cigarettes, into the bargain. For the rest of the time, he was understood to be working on a portrait in his studio, and, what is more surprising, often was. There was nothing remarkable about Pierre's portraits, except that occasionally he sold one, and for money — for *actual money*, the astonishing animal! But if any part of the modest proceeds of such a transaction remained, after the rent had been paid and a new canvas purchased, it was not the *caisse d'épargne* which saw it, be sure of that! For Pierre lived always for the next twenty-four hours, and let the rest of time and eternity look out for themselves.

Yet he took his work seriously. That was the trouble. Even admitting that, thus far, his orders had come only from the more prosperous tradesmen of the Quartier, did that mean, *par exemple*, that they would not come in time from the millionaires of the sixteenth arrondissement? By no means, whatever, said Pierre. To be sure, he had never had the Salon in the palm of his hand, so to speak, but what of that? Jean-Paul himself would tell you that it was all favoritism! So Pierre toiled away at his portrait painting, and made a little com-

petency, but, if the truth were told, no appreciable progress from year's beginning to year's end.

For once, however, his luck had played him false. The fat restaurateur, whose wife's portrait he had finished that afternoon and carried at top speed, with the paint not yet dry, to the rue du Bac, was out of town on business, and would not return until the following evening; and that, so far as Pierre was concerned, was quite as bad as if he were not expected until the following year. Pierre's total wealth amounted to one five-franc piece and three sous, and he had been relying upon the restaurateur's four louis, to enable him to fulfill his promise to Mimi. For the next day was her fête, and they were to have breakfasted in the country, and taken a boat upon the Seine, and returned to dine under the trees. Not at Surresnes or St. Cloud, ah, non ! Something better than that — the true country, sapristi ! at Poissy, twenty-eight kilometres from Paris. All of which meant at least a louis, and, no doubt, more ! And where, demanded Pierre of the great north window, where was a louis to be found ?

---

For there was a tacit understanding among the comrades in the Quartier that there must be no borrowing and lending of money. It was a clause of their creed, which had been adopted in the early days of their companionship, for what was, clearly, the greatest general good, the chances being that no one of them would ever possess sufficient surplus capital either to accommodate another or to repay an accommodation. For a moment, to be sure, the thought had crossed Pierre's mind, but he had rejected it instantly as impracticable. Aside from the unwritten compact, there was no one of them all who could have been of service, had he so willed. Even Jacques Courbet, who possessed a disposition which would have impelled him to chop off his right hand with the utmost cheerfulness, if thereby he could have gratified a friend, was worse than useless in this emergency. Had it been a matter of forty sous—but a louis! As well have asked him for the *Vénus de Milo*, and had done with it.

So it was that, with the premonition of Mimi's disappointed eyes cutting great gaps in his tender heart, Pierre had four times shrugged his shoulders, and quoted to himself

this favorite scrap of his remarkable philosophy, — “Oh, lala! \ All this will arrange itself!” and four times had paused, in the act of lighting a cigarette, and plunged again into the depths of despondent reverie. As he was on the point of again repeating this entirely futile operation, a distant clock struck six, and Pierre, remembering that Mimi must even now be waiting for him at the west door of St. Germain-des-Prés, clapped on his cap, and sallied forth into the gathering twilight.

It was apéritif hour at the Café des Deux Magots, and the long, leather-covered benches against the windows, and the double row of little marble-topped tables in front were rapidly filling, as Pierre and Mimi took their places, and ordered two Turins à l'eau. A group of American Beaux Arts men at their right were chattering in their uncouth tongue, with occasional scraps of Quartier slang, by way of local color, and now and again hailing a newcomer with exclamations, apparently of satisfaction, which began with “Hello!” The boulevard St. Germain was alive with people, walking past with the admirable lack of haste which distinguishes the Parisian, or waiting, in pa-

.....

tient, voluble groups, for a chance to enter the constantly arriving and departing trams and omnibuses; and an unending succession of open cabs filed slowly along the curb, their drivers scanning the terrasse of the café for a possible fare. The air was full of that mingled odor of wet wood pavements and horse-chestnut blossoms, which is the outward, invisible sign of that most wonderful of inward and spiritual combinations — Paris and Spring! And, at the table directly behind Pierre and Mimi sat Caffiard.

There was nothing about Caffiard to suggest a *deus ex machina*, or anything else, for that matter, except a preposterously corpulent old gentleman with an amiable smile. But in nothing were appearances ever more deceitful than in Caffiard. For it was he, with his enormous double chin, and his general air of harmless fatuity, who edited the little colored sheet entitled *La Blague*, which sent half Paris into convulsions of merriment every Thursday morning, and he who knew every caricaturist in town, and was beloved of them all for the heartiness of his appreciation and the liberality of his payments. In the first regard he was

but one of many Parisian editors : but in the second he stood without a peer. Caran d'Ache, Léandre, Willette, Forain, Hermann Paul, Abel Faivre — they rubbed their hands when they came out of Caffiard's private office, and if the day chanced to be Saturday, there was something in their hands worth rubbing. A fine example, Caffiard !

Mimi's black eyes sparkled like a squirrel's as she watched Pierre over the rim of her tumbler of vermouth. She was far from being blind, Mimi, and already, though they had been together but six minutes, she had noted that unusual little pucker between his eyebrows, that sad little droop at the corners of his merry mouth. She told herself that Pierre had been overworking himself, that Pierre was tired, that Pierre needed cheering up. So Mimi, who was never tired, not even after ten hours in Madame Fraichel's millinery establishment, secretly declared war upon the unusual little pucker and the sad little droop.

"Voyons donc, my Pierrot !" she said. "It is not a funeral to which we go to-morrow, at least ! Thou must be gay, for we have much to talk of, thou knowest. One dines at La Boîte ?"



“The dinner is there, such as it is,” replied Pierre gloomily.

“What it is now, is not the question,” said Mimi, with confidence, “but what I make of it — pas? And then there is to-morrow! Oh, lala, lalala! What a pleasure it will be, if only the good God gives us beautiful weather. Dis, donc, great thunder-cloud, dost thou know it, this Poissy?”

Pierre had begun a caricature on the back of the wine-card, glancing now and again at his model, an old man selling newspapers on the curb. He shook his head without replying.

“Eh, b'en, my little one, thou mayest believe me that it is of all places the most beautiful! One eats at the Esturgeon, on the Seine, — but *on* the Seine, with the water quite near, like that chair. He names himself Jarry, the proprietor, and it is a good type — fat and handsome. I adore him! Art thou jealous, species of thinness of a hundred nails? B'en, afterwards, one takes a boat, and goes, softly, softly, down the little arm of the Seine, and creeps under the willows, and, perhaps, fishes. But no, for it is the closed season. But one sings, eh? What does one sing? Voyons!”

She bent forward, and, in a little voice, like an elf's, very thin and sweet, hummed a snatch of a song they both knew.

*"C'est votre ami Pierrot qui vient vous voir :  
Bonsoir, madame la lune !*

"And then," she went on, as Pierre continued his sketch in silence, "and then, one disembarks at Villennes and has a Turin under the arbors of Bodin. Another handsome type, Bodin ! Flut ! *What* a man !"

Mimi paused suddenly, and searched his cloudy face with her earnest, tender little eyes.

"Pierrot," she said, softly, "what hast thou ? Thou art not angry with thy gosseline ?"

Pierre surveyed the outline of the newspaper vender thoughtfully, touched it, here and there, with his pencil-point, squinted, and then pushed the paper toward the girl.

"Not bad," he said, replacing his pencil in his pocket.

But Mimi had no eyes for the caricature, and merely flicked the wine-card to the ground.

"Pierrot" — she repeated.

Vauquelin plunged his hands in his pockets and looked at her.

“ Well, then,” he announced, almost brutally, “ we do not go to-morrow.”

“ *Pierre !* ”

It was going to be much worse than he had supposed, this little tragedy. Bon Dieu, how pretty she was, with her startled, hurt eyes, already filling with tears, and her parted lips, and her little white hand, that had flashed up to her cheek at his words ! Oh, much worse than he had supposed ! But she must be told : there was nothing but that. So Pierre put his elbows on the table, and his chin in his hands, and brought his face close to hers.

“ Voyons ! ” he explained, “ thou dost not believe me angry ! Mais non, mais non ! But listen. It is I who am the next to the last of idiots, since I have never a sou in pocket, never ! And the imbecile restaurateur, whose wife I have been painting, will not return until to-morrow, and so I am not paid. Voilà ! ”

He placed his five-franc piece upon the table, and shrugged his shoulders.

“ One full moon ! ” he said, and piled the three sous upon it. “ And three soldiers. As I sit here, that is all, until to-morrow night. We cannot go ! ”

Brave little Mimi ! Already she was winking back her tears, and smiling.

"But that — that is nothing !" she answered. "I do not care to go. No — but truly ! Look ! We shall spend the day in the studio, and breakfast on the balcony, and pretend the rue Visconti is the Seine."

"I am an empty siphon !" said Pierre, yielding to desperation.

"*Non !*" said Mimi firmly.

"I am a pierced basket, a box of matches !"

"*Non ! Non !*" said Mimi, with tremendous earnestness. "Thou art Pierrot, and I love thee ! Let us say no more. I shall go back and prepare the dinner, and thou shalt remain and drink a Pernod. It will give thee heart. But follow quickly. Give me the key."

She laid her wide-spread hand on his, palm upward, like a little pink starfish.

"We go together, and I adore thee !" said Pierre, and kissed her in the sight of all men, and was not ashamed.

Caffiard leaned forward, picked up the fallen wine-card, pretended to consult it, and ponderously arose. As Pierre was turning the key

in the door of the little apartment, they heard a sound of heavy breathing, and the *deus ex machina* came lumbering up the winding stair.

"Monsieur is seeking some one?" asked the painter politely.

There was no breath left in Caffiard. He was only able, by way of reply, to point at the top button of Pierre's coat, and nod helplessly: then, as Mimi ran ahead to light the gas, he labored along the corridor, staggered through the curtained doorway, stumbled over a rattan stool, was rescued by Pierre, and, finally, established upon the divan, very red and gasping.

For a time there was silence, Pierre and Mimi busying themselves in putting the studio to rights, with an instinctive courtesy which took no notice of their visitor's snorts and wheezes; and Caffiard taking note of his surroundings with his round, blinking eyes. Opposite him, against the wall, reposed the portrait of the restaurateur's wife, as dry and pasty as a stale cream cheese upon the point of crumbling, and on an easel was another — that of Monsieur Pantin, the rich shirt-maker of the boulevard St. Germain — on which Pierre was at work. A veritable atrocity this, with a green

background which trespassed upon Monsieur Pantin's hair, and a featureless face, gaunt and haggard with yellow and purple undertones. There was nothing in either picture to refute one's natural suspicion that soap had been the medium employed. Caffiard blinked harder still as his eyes rested upon the portraits, and he secretly consulted the crumpled wine-card in his hand. Then he seemed to recover his breath by means of a profound sigh.

"Monsieur makes caricatures?" he inquired.

"Ah, monsieur," said Pierre, "at times, and for amusement only. I am a portraitist." And he pointed proudly to the picture against the wall.

For they are all alike, these painters — proudest of what they do least well!

"Ah! Then," said Caffiard, with an air of resignation, "I must ask monsieur's pardon, and descend. I am not interested in portraits. When it comes to caricatures" —

"They are well enough in their way," put in Pierre, "but as a serious affair — to sell, for instance — well, monsieur comprehends that one does not debauch one's art!"

Oh, yes, they are all alike, these painters!

"What is serious, what is not serious?" answered Caffiard. "It is all a matter of opinion. One prefers to have his painting glued to the wall of the Salon, next the ceiling, another to have his drawing on the front page of *La Blague*."

"Oh, naturally *La Blague*," protested Pierre.

"I am its editor," said Caffiard superbly.

"*Eigh!*" exclaimed Pierre. For Mimi had cruelly pinched his arm. Before the sting had passed, she was seated at Caffiard's side, tugging at the strings of a great portfolio.

"Are they imbeciles, these painters, monsieur?" she was saying. "Now you shall see. This great baby is marvelous, but *marvelous*, with his caricatures. Not Léandre himself—it is I who assure you, monsieur!—and to hear him, one would think—but thou *tirest* me, Pierrot!—With his portraits! No, it is *too* much!"

She spread the portfolio wide, and began to shuffle through the drawings it contained.

Caffiard's eyes glistened as he saw them. Even in her enthusiasm, Mimi had not over-shot the mark. They were marvelous indeed, these caricatures, mere outlines for the most

part, with a dot, here and there, of red, or a little streak of green, which lent them a curious, unusual charm. The subjects were legion. Here was Loubet, with a great band of crimson across his shirt bosom, here Waldeck-Rousseau, with eyes as round and prominent as agate marbles, or Yvette, with a nose on which one might have hung an overcoat, or Chamberlain, all monocle, or Wilhelmina, growing out of a tulip's heart, and as pretty as an old print, with her tight-fitting Dutch cap and brodered bodice. And then a host of types — cochers, grisettes, flower women, camelots, Heaven knows what not! — the products of half a hundred idle hours, wherein great-hearted, foolish Pierre had builded better than he knew!

Caffiard selected five at random, and then, from a waistcoat pocket that clung as closely to his round figure as if it had been glued thereto, produced a hundred-franc note.

“I must have these for *La Blague*, monsieur,” he said. “Bring me two caricatures a week at my office in the rue St. Joseph, and you shall be paid at the same rate. It is not much, to be sure. But you will have ample time left for your — for your portrait-painting, monsieur!”



For a moment the words of Caffiard affected Pierre and Mimi as the stairs had affected Caffiard. They stared at him, opening and shutting their mouths and gasping, like fish newly landed. Then, suddenly, animated by a common impulse, they rushed into each other's arms, and set out, around the studio, in a mad waltz, which presently resolved itself into an impromptu can-can, with Mimi skipping like a fairy, and Pierre singing : " Hi ! *Hi* !! Hi !!! " and snapping at her flying feet with a red-bordered handkerchief. After this Mimi kissed Caffiard twice : once on the top of his bald head, and once on the end of his stubby nose. It was like being brushed by the floating down of a dandelion. And, finally, nothing would do but that he must accompany them upon the morrow ; and she explained to him in detail the plan which had so nearly fallen through, and the *deus ex machina* did not betray by so much as a wink that he had heard the entire story only half an hour before.

But, in the end, he protested. But she was insane, the little one, completely ! Had he then the air of one who gave himself into those boats there, name of a pipe ? But let us be

reasonable, voyons ! He was not young like Pierre and Mimi — one comprehended that these holidays did not recommence when one was sixty. What should he do, he demanded of them, trailing along, as one might say, he and his odious fatness ? Ah, *non !* For la belle jeunesse was la belle jeunesse, there was no means of denying it, and it was not for a species of dried sponge to be giving itself the airs of a fresh flower. “But no ! But no !” said Caffiard, striving to rise from the divan. “In the morning I have my article to do for the Figaro, and I am going with Caran to Longchamp, en auto, for the races in the afternoon. But no ! But no !”

It was plain that Caffiard had known Mimi no more than half an hour. One never said, “But no ! But no !” to Mimi, unless it was for the express purpose of having one’s mouth covered by the softest little pink palm to be found between the Seine and the Observatoire, — which, to do him justice, Caffiard was quite capable of scheming to bring about, if only he had known ! He had accepted the little dandelion-down kisses in a spirit of philosophy, knowing well that they were given not for his sake

but for Pierre's. But now his protests came to an abrupt termination, for Mimi suddenly seated herself on his lap, and put one arm around his neck.

It was nothing short of an achievement, this. Even Caffiard himself had not imagined that such a thing as his lap was still extant. Yet here was Mimi, actually installed thereon, with her cheek pressed against his, and her breath, which was like clover, stirring the ends of his moustache. But she was smiling at Pierre, the witch! Caffiard could see it out of the corner of his eye.

"Mais non!" he repeated, but more feebly.

"Mais non! Mais non! Mais non!" mocked Mimi. "Great farceur! Will you listen, at least? Eh b'en, voilà! Here is my opinion. As to insanity, if for any one to propose a day in the country is insanity, well then, yes, — I am insane! Soit! And, again, if you wish to appear serious, — in Paris, that is to say — soit, également! But when you speak of odious fatness, you are a type of monsieur extremely low of ceiling, do you know! Moreover, you are going. Voilà! It is finished. As for Caran, let him go his way and draw his cari-

catures — though they are not like Pierre's, all the world knows! — and, without doubt, his auto will refuse to move beyond the porte Dauphine, yes, and blow up, bon Dieu! when he is in the act of mending it. One knows these boxes of vapors, what they do. And as for the Figaro, b'en, flut! Evidently it will not cease to exist for lack of your article — eh, l'ami? And it is Mimi who asks you, — Mimi, do you understand, who invites you to her fête. And you would refuse her — *toi!*”

“But no! But no!” said Caffiard hurriedly. And meant it.

At this point Pierre wrapped five two-sou pieces in a bit of paper, and tossed them, out of a little window across the hallway, to a street-singer whimpering in the court below. Pierre said that they weighed down his pockets. They were in the way, the clumsy doublins, said wonderful, spendthrift Pierre!

For the wide sky of the Quartier is forever dotted with little clouds, scudding, scudding, all day long. And when one of these passes across the sun, there is a sudden chill in the air, and one walks for a time in shadow, though the comrade over there, across the way, is

still in the warm and golden glow. But when the sun has shouldered the little cloud aside again, ah, that is when life is good to live, and goes gayly, to the tinkle of glasses and the ripple of laughter, and the ring of silver bits. And when the street-singer in the court receives upon his head a little parcel of coppers that are too heavy for the pocket, and smiles to himself, who knows but what he understands?

For what is also true of the Quartier is this — that, in sunshine or shadow, one finds a soft little hand clasping his, firm, warm, encouraging and kindly, and hears a gay little voice that, in foul weather, chatters of the bright hours which it is so sweet to remember, and, in fair, says never a word of the storms which it is so easy to forget!

The veriest bat might have foreseen the end, when once Mimi had put her arm around the neck of Caffiard. Before the *deus ex machina* knew what he was about, he found his army of objections routed, horse, foot, and dragoons, and had promised to be at the gare St. Lazare at eleven the following morning.

And what a morning it was! Surely the bon Dieu must have loved Mimi an atom better

than other mortals, for in the blue-black crucible of the night he fashioned a day as clear and glowing as a great jewel, and set it, blazing with warm light and vivid color, foremost in the diadem of the year. And it was something to see Mimi at the carriage window, with Pierre at her side and her left hand in his, and in her right a huge bouquet — Caffiard's contribution — while the *deus ex machina* himself, breathing like a happy hippopotamus, beamed upon the pair from the opposite corner. So the train slipped past the fortifications, swung through a trim suburb, slid smoothly out into the open country. It was a Wednesday, and there was no holiday crowd to incommode them. They had the compartment to themselves; and the half hour flew like six minutes, said Mimi, when at last they came to a shuddering standstill, and two guards hastened along the platform in opposite directions, one droning "Poiss-y-y-y-y!" and the other shouting "Poiss'! Poiss'! Poiss'!" as if he had been sneezing. It was an undertaking to get Caffiard out of the carriage, just as it had been to get him in. But finally it was accomplished, a whistle trilled from somewhere as if it had

been a bird, another wailed like a stepped-on kitten, the locomotive squealed triumphantly, and the next minute the trio were alone in their glory.

It was a day that Caffiard never forgot. They breakfasted at once, so as to have a longer afternoon. Mimi was guide and commander-in-chief, as having been to the Esturgeon before, so the table was set upon the terrasse overlooking the 'Seine, and there were radishes, and little individual omelettes, and a famous matelote, which Monsieur Jarry himself served with the air of a Lucullus, and, finally, a great dish of quatre saisons, and, for each of the party, a squat brown pot of fresh cream. And, moreover, no ordinaire, but St. Emilion, if you please, with a tin-foil cap which had to be removed before one could draw the cork, and a bottle of Source Badoit as well. And Caffiard, who had dined with the Russian Ambassador on Monday and breakfasted with the Nuncio on Tuesday, and been egregiously displeased with the fare in both instances, consumed an unprecedented quantity of matelote, and went back to radishes after he had eaten his strawberries and cream: while, to cap the

climax, Pierre paid the addition with a louis, — and gave *all* the change as a tip! But it was unheard-of!

Afterwards they engaged a boat, and, with much alarm on the part of Mimi, and satirical comment from Caffiard, and severe admonitions to prudence by Pierre, pushed out into the stream and headed for Villennes, to the enormous edification of three small boys, who hung precariously over the railing of the terrace above them, and called Caffiard a captive balloon.

They made the three kilometres at a snail's pace, allowing the boat to drift with the current for an hour at a time, and, now and again creeping in under the willows at the water's edge until they were wholly hidden from view, and the voice of Mimi singing was as that of some river nixie invisible to mortal eyes. She sang "Bonsoir, Madame la Lune," so sweetly and so sadly that Caffiard was moved to tears. It was her favorite song, because — oh, because it was about Pierrot! And her own Pierrot responded with a gay soldier ballad, a *chanson de route* which he had picked up at the Noctambules; and even Caffiard sang — a



ridiculous ditty it was, which scored the English and went to a rollicking air. They all shouted the refrain, convulsed with merriment at the drollery of the sound : —

*“ Qu'est ce qui quitte ses père et mère  
Afin de s'en aller  
S'faire taper dans le nez ?  
C'est le soldat d'Angleterre !  
Dou-gle-di-gle-dum !  
Avec les ba-a-a-alles dum-dum ! ”*

Caffiard was to leave them at Villennes after they should have taken their apéritifs. They protested, stormed at him, scolded and cajoled by turns, and called him a score of fantastic names — for by this time they knew him intimately — as they sat in Monsieur Bodin's arbor and sipped amer-menthe, but all in vain. Pierre had Mimi's hand, as always, and he had kissed her a half-hundred times in the course of the afternoon. Mimi had a way of shaking her hair out of her eyes with a curious little backward jerk of her head when Pierre kissed her, and then looking at him seriously, seriously, but smiling when he caught her at it. Caffiard liked that. And Pierre had a trick of turning, as if to ask Mimi's opinion, or divine

even her unspoken wishes whenever a question came up for decision — a choice of food or drink, or direction, or what-not. And Caffiard liked *that*.

He looked across the table at them now, dreamily, through his cigarette smoke.

“Pierrot,” he said, after he had persuaded them to let him depart in peace when the train should be due, — “Pierrot. Yes, that is it. You, with your garret, and your painting, and your songs, and your black, black sadness at one moment, and your laughter the next, and, above all, your Pierrette, your bon-bon of a Pierrette : — you are Pierrot, the spirit of Paris in powder and white muslin ! Eigho ! my children, what a thing it is, la belle jeunesse ! Tiens ! you have given me a taste of it to-day, and I thank you. I thought I had forgotten. But no, one never forgets. It all comes back, — youth, and strength, and beauty, love, and music, and laughter, — but only like a breath upon a mirror, my children, only like a wind-ripple on a pool ; for I am an old man.”

He paused, looking up at the vine-leaves on the trellis-roof, and murmured a few words of Mimi’s song : —

*"Pierrette en songe va venir me voir :  
Bonsoir, madame la lune !"*

Then his eyes came back to her face.

"I must be off," he said. "Why, what hast thou, little one? There are tears in those two stars!"

"C'est vrai?" asked Mimi, smiling at him and then at Pierre, and brushing her hand across her eyes, "c'est vrai? Well then, they are gone as quickly as they came. Voilà! Without his tears Pierrot is not Pierrot, and without Pierrot" —

She turned to Pierre suddenly, and buried her face on his shoulder.

"*Je t'aime !*" she whispered. "*Je t'aime !*"



# The Next Corner

**A**NTHONY CAZEBY was a man whom the felicitous combination of an adventurous disposition, sufficient ready money, and a magnificent constitution had introduced to many and various sensations, but he was conscious that, so far as intensity went, no one of them all had approached for a moment that with which he emerged from the doorway of the Automobile Club, and, winking at the sting of the keen winter air, looked out across the place de la Concorde, with its globes of light, swung, like huge pearls on in-

visible strings, across the haze of the January midnight. He paused for a moment, as if he would allow his faculties to obtain a full and final grasp of his situation, and motioned aside the trim little club chasseur who stood before him, with one cotton-gloved hand stretched out expectantly for a supposititious carriage-check.

“Va, mon petit, je vais à pied !”

Afoot ! Cazeby smiled to himself at the tone of sudden caprice which rang in his voice, and, turning his fur collar high up about his ears, swung off rapidly toward the Cours la Reine. After all, the avenue d'Eylau was only an agreeable stroll's length distant. Why not go home afoot ? But then, on the other hand, why go home at all ? As this thought leaped suddenly at Cazeby's throat out of the void of the great unpremeditated, he caught his breath, stopped suddenly in the middle of the driveway, and then went on more slowly, thinking hard.

It had been that *rarissima avis* of social life, even in Paris, a perfect dinner. Cazeby had found himself wondering, at more than one stage of its smooth and imposing progress, how the Flints could afford to do it. But on each recurrence of the thought he dismissed it with

a little frown of vexation. If there was one thing more than another upon which Cazeby prided himself, it was originality of thought, word, and deed, and he was annoyed to find himself, even momentarily, on a mental level with the gossips of the American and English colonies, whose time is equally divided between wondering how the Choses can afford to do what they do, and why the Machins cannot afford to do what they leave undone.

People had said many things of Hartley Flint, and still more of his wife, but no one had ever had the ignorance or the perversity to accuse them of inefficiency in the matter of a dinner. Moreover, on this particular occasion, they were returning the hospitality of the Baroness Klemfft, who had, at the close of the Exposition, impressed into her service the chef of the Roumanian restaurant, and whose dinners were, in consequence, the wonder and despair of four foreign colonies. After her latest exploit Hartley Flint had remarked to his wife that it was "up to them to make good," which, being interpreted, was to say that it was at once his duty and his intention to repay the Baroness in her own sterling coin.

The fact that the men of the party afterwards commended Hartley's choice of wines, and that the women expressed the opinion that "Kate Flint looked *really* pretty!" would seem to be proof positive that the operation of "making good" had been an unqualified success.

Now, Cazeby was wondering whether he had actually enjoyed it all. Under the circumstances it seemed to him incredible, and yet he could not recall a qualm of uneasiness from the moment when the maître d'hôtel had thrown open the doors of the private dining room, until the Baroness had smiled at her hostess out of a cloud of old Valenciennes, and said, "Now there are *two* of us who give impeccable dinners, Madame Flint." Even now, even facing his last ditch, Cazeby was conscious of a little thrill of self-satisfaction. He had said the score of clever things which each of his many hostesses expected of him, and had told with great effect his story of the little German florist, which had grown, that season, under the persuasive encouragement of society's applause, from a brief anecdote into a veritable achievement of Teutonic dialect. Also, he had worn a forty franc orchid,

and had left it in his coffee-cup because it had begun to wilt. In brief, he had been Anthony Cazeby at his extraordinary best, a mixture of brilliancy and eccentricity, without which, as Mrs. Flint was wont to say, no dinner was complete.

But the sublime and the ridiculous are not the only contrasting conditions that lie no further than a step apart, and Cazeby was painfully conscious of having, in the past five minutes, crossed the short interval which divides gay from grave. Reduced to its lowest terms, his situation lay in his words to the little chasseur. With the odor of the rarest orchid to be found in Vaillant-Rozeau's whole establishment yet clinging to his lapel, Anthony Cazeby was going home on foot because the fare from the Concorde to the avenue d'Eylau was one franc fifty, and one franc fifty precisely ninety centimes more than he possessed in the world. For a moment he straightened himself, threw back his head, and looked up at the dull saffron of the low-hanging sky, in an attempt to realize this astounding fact, and then went back to his thinking.

Well, it was not surprising. The life of a



popular young diplomat with extravagant tastes is not conducive to economy, and the forty thousand dollars which had come to Cazeby at the beginning of his twenty-eighth year had proved but a bad second best in the struggle with Parisian gayety. His bibelots, his servants, Auteuil, Longchamp, his baccarat at the Prince de Tréville's, a dancer at the Folies-Marigny, Monte Carlo, Aix, Trouville, — they had all had their share, and now the piper was waiting to be paid and the exchequer was empty. It was an old story. Other men of his acquaintance had done the same, but they had had some final resource. The trouble was, as Cazeby had already noted, that, in his case, the final resource was not, as in theirs, pecuniary. Quite on the contrary, it was a tidy little weapon, of Smith and Wesson make, which lay in the upper right hand drawer of his marqueterie desk. He had looked long at it that same afternoon, with all his worldly wealth, in the shape of forty-two francs sixty, spread out beside it. That was before he had taken a fiacre to Vaillant-Rozeau's.

At the very moment when Cazeby was contemplating these doubtful assets, a grim old

gentleman was seated at another desk, three thousand miles away, engaged upon a calculation of the monthly profits derived from a wholesale leather business. But Cazeby père was one of the hopeless persons who believe in economy. He was of the perverted opinion that money hardly come by should be thoughtfully spent, or, preferably, invested in government bonds, and he had violent prejudices against "industrials," games of chance, and young men who preferred the gayety of a foreign capital to the atmosphere of "the Swamp." Also he was very rich. But Anthony had long since ceased to regard his father as anything more than a chance relation. He could have told what would be the result of a frank confession of his extremity as accurately as if the avowal had been already made. There would have been some brief reference to the sowing of oats and their reaping, to the making of a metaphorical bed and the inevitable occupancy thereof, and to other proverbial illustrations which, in a financial sense, are more ornamental than useful, — and nothing more. The essential spark of sympathy had been lacking between these two since the moment when the

---

most eminent physician in New York had said, "It is a boy, sir, — but — we cannot hope to save the mother." The fault may have lain on the one side, or the other, or on both, or on neither ; but certain it is that to Anthony's imagination Cazeby senior had never appealed in the light of a final resource.

Somehow, in none of his calculations had the idea of invoking assistance ever played a part. Naturally, as a reasoning being, he had foreseen the present crisis for some months, but at the time when the inevitable catastrophe first became clear to him it was already too late to regain his balance, since the remainder of his inheritance was so pitifully small that any idea of retrieving his fortunes through its instrumentality was simply farcical. The swirl of the rapids, as he had then told himself, had already caught his boat. All that was left to do was to go straight on to the sheer of the fall, with his pennant flying and himself singing at the helm. Then, on the brink, a well-placed bullet — no bungling for Anthony Cazeby ! — and the next day people would be talking of the shocking accident which had killed him in the act of cleaning his revolver, and saying the

usual things about a young man with a brilliant future before him and everything in life for which to live.

And this plan he had carried out in every detail — save the last, to which he was now come ; and his was the satisfying conviction that not one of the brilliant, careless men and women, among whom he lived, and moved, and had his being, suspected for a moment that the actual circumstances differed in the least from the outward appearances. He thought it all over carefully now, and there was no play in the entire game that he felt he would have liked to have changed.

Sentiment had no part in the makeup of Anthony Cazeby. Lacking from early childhood the common ties of home affection, and by training and profession a diplomat, he added to a naturally undemonstrative nature the non-committal suavity of official poise. But that was not all. He had never been known to be ill at ease. This was something which gained him a reputation for studious self-control. As a matter of fact it was due to nothing of the sort. No one had ever come fairly at the root of his character except Cazeby père,

who once said, in a fit of passion, "You don't care a brass cent, sir, whether you live and are made President of the United States, or die and are eternally damned!" And that was exactly the point.

Something of all this had passed through Cazeby's mind, when he was suddenly aroused to an appreciation of his whereabouts by the sound of a voice, to find that the curious instinct of direction which underlies advanced inebriety and profound preoccupation alike, had led him up the avenue du Trocadéro, and across the place, and that he had already advanced some little way along the avenue d'Eylau in the direction of his apartment. The street was dimly lighted, but, just behind him, the windows of a tiny wine-shop gave out a subdued glow, and from within came the sound of a violin. Then Cazeby's attention came around to the owner of the voice. This was a youngish man of medium stature, in the familiar street dress of a French laborer, jacket and waistcoat of dull blue velveteen, peg-top trousers of heavy corduroy, a crimson knot at his throat, and a dark tam o'shanter pulled low over one ear. As their eyes met, he apparently

saw that Cazeby had not heard his first remark, and so repeated it.

“I have need of a drink!”

There was nothing of the beggar in his tone or manner. Both were threatening, rather; and, as soon as he had spoken, he thrust his lower jaw forward, in the fashion common to the thug of any and every nationality when the next move is like to be a blow. But, for once, these manifestations of hostility failed signally of effect. Cazeby was the last person in the world to select as the object of sudden attack, with the idea that panic would make him easy prey. In his present state of mind he went further than preserving his equanimity: he was even faintly amused. It was not that he did not comprehend the other's purpose, but, to his way of thinking, there was something distinctly humorous in the idea of holding up a man with only sixty centimes to his name, and menacing him with injury, when he himself was on his way to the upper right hand drawer of the marqueterie desk.

“I have need of a drink,” repeated the other, coming a step nearer. “Thou art not deaf, at least?”

“No,” said Cazeby, pleasantly, “no, I am not deaf, and I, too, have need of a drink. Shall we take it together?” And, without waiting for a reply, he turned and stepped through the doorway of the little wineshop. The Frenchman hesitated, shrugged his shoulders with an air of complete bewilderment, and, after an instant also entered the shop and placed himself at the small table where Cazeby was already seated.

“A vitriol for me,” he said.

Cazeby had not passed three years in Paris for nothing. He received this remarkable request with the unconcern of one to whom the slang of the exterior boulevards is sufficiently familiar, and, as the proprietor leaned across the nickled slab of his narrow counter with an air of interrogation, duplicated his companion’s order.

“Deux vitriols !”

The proprietor, vouchsafing the phrase a grin of appreciation, lumbered heavily around to the table, filled two small glasses from a bottle of cheap cognac, and stood awaiting payment, hands on hips.

“Di-ze sous,” he said.

There was no need to search for the exact amount. Cazeby spun his fifty-centime piece upon the marble, added his remaining two sous by way of *pourboire*, and disposed of the brandy at a gulp.

"Have you also need of a cigarette?" he inquired, politely, tendering the other his case.

For some minutes, as they smoked, the diplomat and the vagabond took stock of each other in silence. In many ways they were singularly alike. There was in both the same irony of lip line, the same fair chiseling of chin and nostril and brow, the same weariness of eye. The difference was one of dress and bearing alone, and, in those first moments of mutual analysis, Cazeby realized that there was about this street-lounger a vague air of the gentleman, a subtle suggestion of good birth and breeding, which even his slouching manner and coarse speech were not wholly able to conceal: and his guest was conscious that in Cazeby he had to deal with no mere society puppet, but with one in whom the limitations of position had never wholly subdued the devil-may-care instincts of the vagabond. The one was a finished model of a man of the world,



the other a caricature, but the clay was the same.

"I am also hungry," said the latter suddenly.

"In that respect," responded Cazeby, in the same tone of even politeness, "I am, unfortunately, unable to assist you, unless you will accept the hospitality of my apartment. It is but a step, and I am rather an expert on bacon and eggs. Also," he added, falling into the idiom of the faubourgs, "there is a means there of remedying the dryness of the sponge in one's throat. My name is Antoine."

"I am Bibi-la-Raie," said the other shortly. Then he continued, with instinctive suspicion, "It is a strange fashion thou hast of introducing a type to these gentlemen."

"As a matter of fact," said Cazeby, "I do not live over a poste. But whether or not you will come is something for you to decide. It is less trouble to cook eggs for one than for two."

Bibi-la-Raie reflected briefly. Finally he had recourse to his characteristic shrug.

"After all, what difference?" he said. "As well now as another time. I follow thee!"

The strangely assorted companions entered Cazeby's apartment as the clock was striking one, and pressure of an electric button, flooding the salon with light, revealed a little tea-table furnished with cigarettes and cigars, decanters of Scotch whiskey and liqueurs, and Venetian goblets of oddly tinted glass. Cazeby shot a swift glance at his guest as this array sprang into view, and was curiously content to observe that he manifested no surprise. Bibi-la-Raie had flung himself into a great leather chair with an air of being entirely at ease.

"Not bad, thy little box," he observed. "Is it permitted?"

He indicated the table with a nod.

"Assuredly," said Cazeby. "Do as if you were at home. I shall be but a moment with the supper."

When he returned from the kitchen, bearing a smoking dish of bacon and eggs, butter, rye bread, and Swiss cheese, Bibi-la-Raie was standing in rapt contemplation before an etching of the "Last Judgment."

"What a genius, this animal of a Michel Ange!" he said.

"Rather deft at times," replied Cazeby, arranging the dishes on the larger table.

"Je te crois!" said Bibi, enthusiastically. "Without him — what? Evidently, it was not Léon Treize who built Saint Pierre!"

The eggs had been peculiarly obstinate, as it happened, and a growing irritability had taken possession of Anthony. As they ate in silence, the full force of his tragic position returned to him. Even the unwontedness of his chance encounter with Bibi-la-Raie had not wholly dispelled the cloud that had been gradually settling around him since he emerged from the Automobile Club, and, as they finished the little repast, he turned suddenly upon his guest, in a burst of irritation.

"Who are you?" he said. "And what does all this mean? Was I mistaken, when you first spoke to me, in thinking you a mere voyou? Surely not! You meant to rob me. You speak the argot of the fortifications. Yet here I find you discoursing on Michel Angelo as though you were the conservateur of the Uffizzi! What am I to think?"

Bibi-la-Raie lit another cigarette, blew forth the smoke in a thin, gray wisp, and thrust his

thumbs into the arm-holes of his velveteen waistcoat.

"And *you*," he said, slowly, abandoning the familiar address he had been using, "who are *you*? No, you were not mistaken in thinking I meant to rob you. Such is my profession. But does a gentleman reply, in ordinary, to the summons of a thief by paying that thief a drink? Does he invite him to his apartment and cook a supper for him? What am *I* to think?"

There was a brief pause, and then he faced his host squarely.

"Are you absolutely resolved to put an end to it all to-night?" he demanded.

Cazeby made a small sign of bewilderment.

"Ah, *mon vieux*," continued the other. "That, you know, is of no use with me. You ask me who I am. For one thing, I am one who has lived too long in touch with desperate men not to know the look in the eyes when the end has come. You think you are going to blow out your brains to-night."

"Your wits are wandering; that's all," said Cazeby, compassionately.

"Oh, far from it!" said Bibi-la-Raie, with a short laugh. "But one does not fondle one's

revolver in the daytime without a good reason, nor does one leave it *on top* of letters postmarked this morning unless one has been fondling it — quoi ? ”

Cazeby was at the marqueterie desk in two strides, tugging at the upper right hand drawer. It was locked. He turned about slowly, and, half seating himself on the edge of the desk, surveyed his guest coolly.

“ The revolver is in your pocket,” he said.

“ No,” answered Bibi, with an air of cheerfulness. “ I have one of my own. But the key is.”

“ Why ? ” said Cazeby.

Bibi helped himself to yellow chartreuse, and appeared to reflect.

“ I am not sure that I know why, myself,” he said finally. “ Perhaps, because you have done me a kindness and I would not like to have you burn your fingers in a moment of absent-mindedness. Perhaps, because we might disagree, and I should not care to take the chance of your shooting first ! ”

He squinted at the liqueur, swallowed it slowly and with extreme appreciation, smacked his lips, and then, cocking his feet up on

Cazeby's brass club fender, began to smoke again, staring into the dwindling fire. His host watched him in silence, until he should be ready to speak, which he presently began to do, with his cigarette drooping from the corner of his mouth and moving in time to his words. He had suddenly and curiously become a man of the world — of the grand monde — and his speech had shaken off all trace of slang, and was tinged instead with the faint club sarcasm which one hears in the glass card-room of the Volney or over coffee on the roof of the Automobile. Moreover, it was beautiful French. Not Mounet himself could have done better.

“The only man to whom one should confide personal secrets,” said Bibi-la-Raie, “is he whom one has never seen before and will, as is probable, never see again. I could tell you many things, Monsieur Cazeby, since that is your name, — I have seen your morning's mail, you know! — but, for the moment, let it suffice to say that the voyou who accosted you this evening is of birth as good as yours — pardon, but probably better! *Wein, weib, und gesang* — you know the saying. Add cards

and the race-course, and you have, complete, the short ladder of five rungs down which I have been successful in climbing. I shall presume to the extent of supposing that you have just accomplished the same descent. One learns much thereby, but more after one has reached the ground. In many ways I am afraid experience has made me cynical, but in one it has taught me optimism. I have found, and I think I shall continue to find, that there is always something worth looking into around the next corner of even the darkest street. The rue des Sablons, for instance. It was very dark to-night, very damp, and very cold. Assuredly, as I turned into the avenue d'Eylau I had no reason to foresee a supper, Russian cigarettes, and chartreuse jaune. And yet, *me voilà!* Now what most of us lack — what you, in particular, seem to lack, Monsieur Cazeby — is the tenacity needful if one is to get to that next turning."

"There are streets darker than the rue des Sablons," put in Anthony, falling in with the other's whimsical humor, "and that have no turning."

"You speak from conjecture, not experi-

ence," said Bibi-la-Raie. "You can never have seen one."

He glanced about the room, with the air of one making a mental inventory.

"First," he added, "there come the pawnshop, the exterior boulevards, the somewhat insufficient shelter of the Pont Royal. No, you have not come to the last corner."

"All that," said Cazeby, "is simply a matter of philosophy. Each of us has his own idea of what makes life worth the while. When that is no longer procurable, then that is the last corner."

"For instance — ?"

"For instance, my own case. You have analyzed my situation sufficiently well — though when you said I was about to blow out my brains" —

"It was a mere guess," interrupted Bibi, "founded on circumstantial evidence. Then I *thought* so. Now I *know* it."

"Let us grant you are right," continued Cazeby, with a smile. "I have my own conception of what I require to make existence tolerable. It includes this apartment, or its equivalent, a horse, two servants, two clubs,



and a sufficient income to dress, eat, entertain, and amuse myself in the manner of my class, — an extravagant and unreasonable standard, if you will, but such is my conviction. Now, granted that the moment has come when it is no longer possible for me to have these things, and when there is no prospect of my situation being bettered, I cannot conceive what advantage there can be in continuing to live.”

“I perceive you are a philosopher,” said the other. “How about the religious view?”

Cazeby shrugged his shoulders.

“As to that,” he said, “my religious views are, so far as I know, stored away in the little church which I was forced to attend three times on every Sunday of my boyhood. They did not come out with me on the last occasion, and I have never met them since.”

“Excellent!” said Bibi. “It is the same with me. But I think you are mistaken in your conviction of what makes life worth living. I had my own delusions in the time. But I have had a deal of schooling since then. There are many things as amusing as luxury — even on the exterior boulevards. Of course, actual ex-

perience is essential. One never knows what one would do under given conditions."

He turned suddenly, and looked Cazeby in the eye.

"What, for example, would you do if you were in my place?" he asked.

"As you say, one never knows," said his host. "I *think* that, in your place, I should improve the opportunity you find open, and carry out your late and laudable intention of robbing Monsieur Antoine Cazeby. I may be influenced by my knowledge that such a proceeding would not irritate or incommode him in the least, but that is what I think I should do.

"I shall not need these things to-morrow," he added, indicating his surroundings with a gesture. "You were quite right about the pistol. As to your prospective booty, I regret to say that I spent my last sixty centimes on our cognac, but there is a remarkably fine scarf-pin on the table in my dressing-room."

"A sapphire, surrounded by black pearls," put in the other. "You were rather long in cooking those eggs."

"A sapphire, surrounded by black pearls,"

---

agreed Cazeby. "Yes, upon reflection, I am quite sure that that is what I should do."

Bibi-la-Raie smiled pleasantly.

"I am glad to find we are of one mind," he said. "Of course, mine was made up, but it is more agreeable to know that I am causing you no inconvenience. I suppose it is unnecessary to add that resistance will be quite useless. I have the only available revolver, and, moreover, I propose to tie you into this extremely comfortable chair. It is not," he added, "that I do not trust you, although our acquaintance is, unfortunately, too recent to inspire complete confidence. No, I have my convictions as well as you, Monsieur Cazeby, and one of them, curiously enough, is that, in spite of appearances, I am doing you a kindness in putting it out of your power, for to-night, at least, to do yourself an injury. Who knows? Perhaps, in the morning, you may find that there is something around the next corner, after all. If not, there is no harm done. Your servants come in early?"

"At seven o'clock," said Anthony, briefly.

"Exactly. And I will leave the key in the drawer."

Bibi was expeditious. When he had bound Cazeby firmly, and with an art that showed practice, he disappeared into the dressing-room, returning in less than a minute with the sapphire scarf-pin and several other articles of jewelry in his hand.

"I should like to add to these," he said, going to the book-case, "this little copy of Omar Khayyám. He is a favorite of mine. There is something about his philosophy which seems to accord with our own. But — 'the bird of time has but a little way to flutter' " — He paused at the door.

"Can I do anything for you before I go?" he inquired politely.

"Be good enough to turn off the light," said the other. "The button is on the right of the door."

"Good-night," said Bibi-la-Raie.

"Good-night, — brother!" said Cazeby.

Then he heard the door of the apartment close softly.

Anthony was awakened from a restless sleep by the sound of its opening. Through the gap between the window draperies the gray light of the winter morning was creeping in.

His wrists and ankles were aching from the pressure of the curtain cords with which he had been bound, and he was gratified when, after a brief interval, the salon door was opened in its turn and the invaluable Jules came in, in shirt-sleeves and long white apron, carrying a handful of letters.

That impassive person was probably never nearer to being visibly surprised. For a breath he stopped, and the pupils of his round eyes dilated like those of a cat in a dim light. But his training stood him in good stead, and when he spoke his voice was as innocent of emotion as if he had been announcing dinner.

“Monsieur desires to be untied?”

Left to himself, Cazeby turned his attention to his letters, and from the top of the pile picked up a cablegram. He was still reflecting upon the singular experience of the night, in an attempt to analyze his present emotions. Was he in any whit changed by his enforced reprieve? He was glad to think not. Above all minor faults he abhorred vacillation of purpose. No, his situation and his purpose remained unaltered. But he was conscious, nevertheless, of an unwonted thrill at the

thought that, but for the merest chance, it would have been for others to open the envelope he was even now fingering. Jules would already have found him — he wondered, with the shadow of a smile, whether Jules would still have been unsurprised! — and would have brought up the concierge and the police —

Suddenly the cable message jumped at him through his revery as if, at that moment, the words had been instantaneously printed on what was before blank paper, and he realized that it was from his father's solicitor.

Mr. Cazeby died eight o'clock this evening after making will your favor whole property. Waiting instructions.

MILLIKEN.

Anthony straightened himself with a long sigh, and, putting aside the curtain, looked out across the mansardes, wet and gleaming under a thin rain. His hand trembled a little on the heavy velvet, and he frowned at it, and, going across to the table, poured himself out a swallow of brandy.

With the glass at his lips he paused, his eyes upon the chair where Bibi-la-Raie had sat and wherein he himself had passed five hours. Then, very ceremoniously, he bowed and dipped his glass toward an imaginary occupant.

“Merci, monsieur !” he said.



## The Only Son of His Mother

**I**N the limited understanding of Pépin dwelt one great Fact, in the shadow of which all else shrank to insignificance, and that Fact was the existence of Comte Victor de Villerssexel, the extremely tall and extraordinarily imposing person who was, first of all, Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, second, Membre de l'Académie Française, and, lastly, father to Pépin himself. It must be acknowledged that to the more observing of his limited kinsfolk and extensive acquaintance the clay feet of Pépin's idol were distinctly in evidence. How



he had contrived to attain to the proud eminence which he occupied was, in the earlier days of his publicity, a matter of curious conjecture and not over-plausible explanation. Certainly no inherent merit or ability it was which formed the first step of the stairway he had climbed. In diplomacy the Comte de Villersexel had never bettered his first appointment as second secretary of legation at Belgrade ; in literature his achievements were limited to one ponderous work on feudalism, remarkable chiefly for its surpassing futility ; and in society his sole claim to consideration lay in his marriage to a Brazilian heiress, who had died within the year, leaving her husband an income of two hundred thousand francs — and Pépin. In all this it was difficult to find a sufficient reason for the crimson button and the green embroidered coat, unless it was that the family of de Villersexel went back to the Crusades. That is not always a prudent thing for a family to do, but the present instance was an exception.

Born to the heritage of a name which his predecessors had made notable, Comte Victor was one of those whose greatness is thrust

upon them rather than achieved, one of the bubbles in the ferment of Paris which their very levity brings to the top, to show rainbow tints in the sunlight of publicity. It is probable that no one was more surprised than de Villersexel himself at the honors which fell to his share, but one thing even the most contemptuous had, perforce, to concede. Once secure of his laurels, he wore them with a confidence that was akin to conviction. His reserve was iron-clad, his dignity stupendous. It required considerable time for new acquaintances to probe the secret of his insufficiency. Victor de Villersexel was, as the irreverent young military attaché at the American Embassy once said of him, "a dazzling imitation of the real thing."

But to Pépin the idol was an idol without flaw. Through what shrewd appreciation of occasional words and chance comments he had contrived to grasp the significance of that speck of scarlet upon the Count's lapel and that apparently simple phrase, "de l'Académie Française," which, in formal introductions, was wont to follow his father's name, must be numbered among childhood's mysteries. But before he

was seven, Pépin had solved these problems for himself, and the results of his reasoning were awestruck admiration and blind allegiance to the will of this wonderful creature who never smiled. His own small individuality was so completely overshadowed by that of his father that in the latter's presence the child was scarcely noticeable, dressed in his sober blouses, and creeping about the stately rooms of the great apartment in the avenue d'Iéna with an absolutely noiseless step. He was all brown, was Pépin: brown bare legs, and brown hands, very small and slender, brown hair, cropped short and primly parted, and deep brown eyes, eloquent of unspoken and unspeakable things. He was earnest, his tutor said, earnest and willing, but not bright, poor Pépin! He spoke English, to be sure, with a curious accent caught from his Cornish nurse, but that was due not so much to ability as to enforced association. In his French grammar and such simple arithmetic as was required of him he was slow and often stupid. But he was rarely scolded, and never punished. Once, indeed, the Comte had been about to strike him for some trifling fault, but somehow the

blow, for which Pépin stood waiting, never fell.

"He is like his mother," the légionnaire had muttered, as he turned away, "an imbecile — but " —

Pépin, catching the unfinished phrase, grew sick with a great discouragement, mingled with profound pity for the man before him. It must be a dreadful thing for one so famous to be the father of an imbecile ! From that day on the child was more inconspicuous than before.

Deliberately affected in the first instance, what was known in society as de Villersexel's "academic manner" came in course of time to be second nature. Practice made perfect the chill reserve which was originally assumed as a precaution against possible discovery of his vapidty ; and as the image of what the academician had been, before his election, grew dimmer in society's recollection, his impressive solemnity, barely disguised by a veneer of superficial courtesy, did not fail of its effect. He was spoken of as a man in whom much lay below the surface, and his more recent acquaintances coupled their estimate of his character with the proverbial profundity of still waters,

and the familiar gloved fist of steel. Others, more observant, smiled at the similes, but did not go to the pains of proving them ill applied. One of the most characteristic things about the Comte de Villersexel was that he inspired neither championship nor antagonism.

With all this, he was consistent, with that curious obstinacy which is sometimes made manifest in the shallowest natures. His rôle, once assumed, was, as we have said, played to perfection and never laid aside. The domestic threshold, which is, for the majority of men, a kind of uncloaking room, saw never an alteration, even of voice or expression, in his pose. The household affairs were regulated with almost military precision, and once a day, at noon, Pépin and his father met in the large salon, — the Comte in his tall satin stock and frock coat, and Pépin fresh from the careful hands of his nurse. They shook hands gravely, and then waited in silence, until the maître d'hôtel announced breakfast, —

“Ces messieurs sont servis !”

What meals they were, to be sure, those déjeuners, solemnly served, and more solemnly eaten, under the rigid observation of three

menservants ; de Villersexel, with his thin lips, his cold eyes, and his finely pointed gray mustache, barely moving save to raise his fork or break a morsel from his roll, and Pépin, all brown, perched like a mouse on the edge of a great chair, and nibbling at tiny scraps of food with downcast eyes !

At the very end, as the Comte was about to push back his chair, he would invariably raise his glass of champagne and Pépin his, wherein a few drops of red wine turned the Evian to a pale heliotrope, and together they would glance toward the full-length portrait which hung above the mantel.

“Ta mère !” said the Comte.

“Maman !” replied Pépin.

And so they drank the toast of tribute to the dead.

After breakfast, the father would read for an hour to the child, and Pépin, seated on another large chair, would listen, perfectly motionless, striving desperately to understand the long sentences which fell in flawlessly pronounced succession from the Academician’s lips. De Villersexel had a fairly clear recollection of what books had been the compan-

ions of his childhood, and these he purchased in the rarest editions, and clothed in the richest bindings, and read to Pépin : only his remembrance did not extend to a very distinct differentiation between seven and fifteen, for it was at the latter age that he read "Télémaque" to himself, and at the former that he read "Télémaque" to his son.

Then would come a second formal handshake, and Pépin, pausing an instant at the door to make a slow, stiff bow, would creep off down the long corridor to the nursery, and the Comte turn again to his papers with a consciousness of paternal duty done.

How Pépin contrived to spend the long hours which his daily walk and his short lessons left at his disposal, only Pépin knew. He talked rarely with the servants, — "a thing," his father told him, "that no gentleman would wish to do ;" and other children never entered at the de Villersexel door, "for," said the Comte, "children sow unfortunate ideas and spread disease."

But there were compensations. One was the full-length portrait over the chimney-piece in the dining-room. Pépin had no conception

of how great was the signature it bore, or of the fabulous sum which it had cost, but he knew it was very beautiful, and, besides, it was his mother, — the sad-eyed, pale dream-mother he had never seen.

The portrait of the Comtesse de Villersexel had been one of the sensations at the Salon of seven years before. The young Brazilian was represented at the moment when the bow left the strings of her violin, and on her lips and in her eyes yet dwelt the spirit of the music she had been playing. A clinging gown of ivory-white silk emphasized rather than hid the lines of her figure, of strangely girlish slenderness, but straight and proud as that of a young empress. In its frailty lay the keynote of the portrait's charm. It was like a reflection in clear water that a touch might disturb, or a young anemone that a breath might destroy, — not a picture before which people disputed and proffered noisy opinions, but one which imposed silence, like the barely audible note of a distant Angelus. It stood before the memory of its original, as it had been a spirit, finger on lip, at the doorway of a tomb.

This portrait of his mother dominated the



life of Pépin like the half-remembered substance of a dream. He had known nothing of her in the life, for the breath of being had passed from her lips to his at the moment of his birth, but with the intuition of childhood, he seemed to know that this was one who would have loved him and whom he would have loved. He spent hours before the picture, silent, spell-bound, gazing into the deep and tender eyes that shone with the same pathetic pleading that lay so eloquently in his own, and the only outbreak of rage which had ever stirred his simple serenity was on one occasion when his nurse had found him thus absorbed, and, receiving no response to her summons, half alarmed and half indignant, reproached him with wasting his time before a stupid picture. Then Pépin had whirled around upon her, his lips compressed, his small brown hands clenched, and a look in his eyes that terrified even the stout and prosaic Cornish-woman out of her accustomed attitude of fat complacency.

“A stupid picture?” he stormed. “But it is my mother, do you hear, my mother! You are a wicked woman, Elizabeth!”

It was when Pépin was nearing his seventh birthday that a wonderful thing happened. The Comte was giving a great reception to the Russian Ambassador, and on an impulse which, perhaps, even he himself could hardly have explained, sent for his son. The child was aroused from sleep, and, but half awake and totally uncomprehending, was submitted by the worthy Elizabeth to a veritable cyclone of washing, combing, and brushing, and finally, clad in spotless duck, was led by the maître d'hôtel down the long corridor to the door of the grand salon, which, at his approach, swung open under the touch of one of the under servants. Pépin, dazed by the radiance of many lights and a great clamor of voices, paused on the threshold, and, with a swift intuition of what was demanded of him, made his slow, stiff bow.

"Le Vicomte de Villersexel," said the maître d'hôtel in a loud voice at his side, and Pépin, seeing his father beckon to him from the group where he stood, slipped close to him through the crowd, and was surprised to find that the Comte took his hand in his, and bent forward to say in a whisper, —

"You are to hear Pazzini play the violin.

That is why I sent for you. He was your mother's teacher."

Like all that had gone before, what followed was to Pépin like a dream — a beautiful dream, never to be forgotten. A great hush had settled upon the brilliant assemblage, for even in Paris there are still things which society will check its chatter to hear, and the tall, gray-bearded man, consulting with the pianist over there, was Pazzini, the great Pazzini, whose services had been more than once commanded by royalty in vain. De Villersexel had drawn Pépin nearer to the piano in the brief interval, and as the opening chords of the introduction were struck, he found himself but a few feet from the famous violinist, his hand still linked in that of his father, his eyes fixed in wonder upon this unknown man who had been his mother's teacher.

The first low note of the violin fell upon the silence like a faint, far voice, heard across a wide reach of calm water, and, as the marvelous melody swelled into the fullness of its motif, something new and strange stirred in Pépin's heart, mounted and tightened in his throat, ran tingling to his finger-tips. Through

his half parted lips the breath tiptoed in and out, and his deep eyes grew every instant, could he have known it, more like those of the picture that he loved. So he stood entranced, seeing, hearing nothing but Pazzini and Pazzini's violin, till the sonata drew imperceptibly toward its close. Like the child, the great violinist seemed to be unconscious of all that surrounded him. Slowly, tenderly, he led his music through the last phrases, until he paused before the supreme high sweetness of the final note. How it was he could never have told, but, in that infinitesimal fraction of time, the training of years played him false. He knew that his finger-tip slipped an incalculable atom of space, but it was too late. The bow was on the string, and the imperceptibly flatted note swelled, sank, and died away, unrecognized, he thought, with a throb of thankfulness, by any save his master ear. And then —

“*Ah-h!*” said Pépin.

The long ripple of applause drowned the child's whisper, and for an instant the terror in his heart grew still, believing his exclamation unheard. Then it leaped to life again, for Pazzini was looking at him, his bow hovering

above the instrument like his mother's in the picture. In the mysterious solitude of the crowded room the eyes of these two met, each reading the other's as they had been an open book, and in Pépin's was the pain of a wounded animal, and in Pazzini's a great wonder and sorrow, as of one who has hurt without intention, and mutely pleads for pardon.

As the applause ceased, the violinist turned to the Comte, and pointed to Pépin with his bow.

"Who is that child?" he asked.

The thaw in the de Villersexel's "academic manner" had been but momentary. With the renewed hum of conversation he was himself again, pale, proud, and immovable.

"It is my son, Pépin," he replied, with stiff courtesy. "How shall I thank you for your playing? It was the essence of perfection, as it has ever been, and ever will be."

But he could not know, as he turned away with Pépin, that in his heart the violinist said, "Her boy! I understand!"

The miracle of his summons to the salon that night was not, as it appeared, the actual climax of existence, for a new marvel awaited

Pépin on the morrow. The doors of the dining-room had barely slid together behind them when the Comte turned to him.

"Yesterday was Christmas," he said.

Pépin made no reply. In fact, the stupor which descended upon him at this infraction of the usual routine of life effectually deprived him, for the moment, of the power of speech.

"It was Christmas," repeated the Comte, "and because of that you are invited to a — a — soirée to-day. Do you know the English children on the entresol?"

"I have seen them," faltered Pépin, "but we have never spoken. You told me" —

"I have changed my mind," broke in his father. "Monsieur 'Ameelton" — stumbling desperately over the English name — "has asked me to let you visit them this afternoon, and I have said yes to him. Elizabeth will dress you. Now you may go."

Barely conscious that Pépin had added a timid "Merci, papa!" to his customary bow, de Villersexel turned to his writing-table, as the door closed behind the little Vicomte, and, unlocking a drawer, took therefrom a letter which had come to him that morning, and,

burying himself in his arm-chair, proceeded to its careful reperusal. It was in the fine Italian handwriting of Pazzini, and ran as follows : —

MY DEAR FRIEND, — This is to be at once a confession and a prayer. What would you say if I were to tell you that Pazzini — the flawless Pazzini, as men are pleased to call me ! — murdered, yes, murdered last night's sonata by flattening that wonderful final note ? Oh, it was a very little thing, and passed unnoticed, for they are stupid, these wise people who listen to me, and they did not hear. Even you, my poor friend, even you could not detect that tiny flaw that was a monstrous crime. No, of all who listened, there were but two that understood what I had done. I was one of these, and the other was your son — Pépin.

Do you know what that means, Monsieur le Comte de Villersexel ? Do you understand that it is but one ear in millions that is so finely keyed that this minutest deviation could wound it like the most utter discord ? And I wounded him, your Pépin. I saw it in his eyes. Therefore I tell you — I, who know — that he is a genius, a genius greater than his

mother, and that, like her, he must be my pupil. I have none other now. It shall be the work of my old age to make him the greatest violinist of his day. Give him to me, my friend, if not for his own sake, then for hers !

PAZZINI.

Prime feature of all the year to the little Hamiltons, on the entresol, was their Christmas tree. It arrived in some unknowable way in the corner of the grand salon on the morning after Christmas, and, from the moment of its advent, the doors were sealed, and only the privileged world of grown-ups went in and out, and could see the splendors within. Inch by inch the hands of the tall clock in the anti-chambre dragged themselves around successive circles toward the hour of revelation, and, keyed to the snapping point of frenzy, the slender figure of George and the round, squat form of John stood motionless before the inexorable timepiece, awaiting the stroke of four. This suspense was harrowing enough in itself, and only made bearable by recourse to occasional mad caperings up and down the hall, and whoops of mingled ecstasy and exasperation.



What was worse was the delay in the arrival of their guests. Later, the latter would be an indispensable part of the festivities : just now they were mere impediments in the path of bliss. Even the grown-ups were more considerate, and came on time. Well they might, since they were granted immediate admission to the enchanted room, and came out with maddening accounts of what was to be seen therein. They sat about the small salon, and talked the stupid things of which they were so fond of talking, — Hamilton, tall, straight, and with an amused twinkle in his eyes, while he watched his wife vainly endeavoring to calm her sons as they foamed and pranced at the sealed doors ; Miss Kedgwick, who wrote books, and invited boys to tea ; Monsieur de Bercy, who was odd because he spoke no English, but who cut heads out of nuts and apples, and drew droll pictures on scraps of paper ; Miss Lys, who played the piano for “ Going to Jerusalem ; ” and Mr. Sedgely, who talked very low in her ear, and said the great trouble with “ Going to Jerusalem ” was that the players could n’t go there in good earnest — whatever that might mean.

But would the doors *never* open ?

The children arrived by twos and threes, shook hands limply with their elders, greeted their small hosts with embarrassed ceremony, and then, as if suddenly inoculated with the latter's madness, commenced to foam and prance in their turn before the unyielding portals. Last of all came Pépin, all brown, who bowed at the door, and then in turn to each of those who spoke to him.

Suddenly, with a shout, the children burst through the opened doorway, and gathered in voluble groups about the glistening miracle which shone like a hundred stars in the gathering twilight. For a half hour all was chaos, and Pépin, standing a little apart, marveled and was still. Dancing figures whirled about him, bearing boxes of soldiers, toy villages, dolls, trumpets, drums. The air was full of the wailing of whistles, the cries of mechanical animals, and the clamor of childish comment.

But to Pépin even the dazzling novelty of his surroundings was as nothing, compared to one object which drew and fixed his attention from the first instant, as the needle is held rigid by the magnetic pole. High up upon the

tree, clearly outlined against its background of deep green, and gleaming gorgeously with fresh varnish in the light of the surrounding candles, hung a violin — not one like Monsieur Pazzini's, large and of a dull brown, but small — a violin for Pépin himself to hold, and new, and bright, and beyond all things beautiful and to be desired !

Then his attention was distracted for a moment. From the time of his entrance the eyes of Miss Lys had followed the dignified and silent little Frenchman, and where Miss Lys went Mr. Sedgely followed, so that now the two were so close that they brushed his elbow, and Pépin, turning with an instinctive "Pardon," saw that they were watching him curiously. When, with a feeling of restlessness under their scrutiny, he looked once more towards the tree, the violin was gone ! An instant later, he saw it in the madly sawing hands of George Hamilton, dancing like a faun down the room, and he was conscious of a great faintness, such as he had known but once before, — when he had cut his hand, and the doctor had sewed it, as Elizabeth sewed rips in cloth.

"He is adorable," said Ethel Lys, "but I have never seen a sadder face. What eyes! — two brown poems."

"He makes my heart ache," answered Sedgely, slowly, "and yet I could hardly say why. Ask him what he wants off the tree."

The girl was on her knees by Pépin before the phrase was fairly finished.

"What didst thou have for Christmas?" she asked, falling unconsciously into that tender second singular which slips so naturally from the lips at sight of a French child.

"I?—but nothing," replied the little Vicomte, pleased out of his anguish by the sound of his own tongue amid the babel of English phrases.

The girl at his side looked at him with so frank an astonishment that he felt it necessary to explain.

"I have my gifts on the day of the year. Christmas is an English fête, and I am French. So I have nothing."

"Nothing!" replied Miss Lys blankly, and then, of a sudden, slipped her arm around him, and drew his head close to her own.

"What dost thou see on the tree that thou

wouldst like to have?" she asked, eagerly.  
"What is there, dearest?"

And, at the unwonted tenderness of her question, the floodgates of Pépin's reserve suddenly gave way. Placing his hands upon the girl's shoulders, he searched her face with his eyes.

"If there were another violin" — he began, and, faltering, stopped, and turned away to hide the tears that would come, strive as he might to hold them back.

"Did you *hear* him — and *see* him?" queried Miss Lys, a minute after, furiously backing Sedgely into a corner by the lapels of his frock coat. "You *did* — you *know* you did! And you are still here? Lord! *What* a man!"

Sedgely shrugged his shoulders with a pretense of utter bewilderment.

"What must I do?" he inquired, blankly.

"*Do?*" stormed Miss Lys. "*Do?* Why, scour Paris till you find a violin precisely like that one George is doing his best to saw in half. Here! Clément is at the door with the trois-quarts. Tell him to drive you like mad to the Printemps — to the big place opposite the Grand Hotel — to the Louvre — to the

Bon Marché — anywhere — everywhere! But inside of one hour I must have that violin!”

When Sedgely returned, thirty minutes later, violin in hand, Ethel met him at the door.

“They are all at tea,” she said. “We’ll call Pépin out.”

She placed the violin in the hands of the Vicomte without a word, and without a word Pépin took it from her. The instrument slid to his cheek as if impelled by its own desire.

“Canst thou play?” she asked him.

“No,” said Pépin, “and, besides, it is but a toy. I do not want to hear it. But I like to feel it — here.” And he moved his cheek caressingly against the cheap varnish.

“Don’t you think you might” — began Sedgely, and then found himself on the other side of the door, and Miss Lys facing him with an air of hopeless resignation.

“I — act-u-ally — be-lieve,” she said, with an effort at calm, “that you were going to ask him to thank me for it!”

“Why not?” said Sedgely.

“*Lord!* What a man!” said Miss Lys.

. . . . .  
In the dining-room of the de Villersexel

apartment the Comte paced slowly to and fro, with bent head, and fingers that locked and unlocked behind his back. In the heavy chair before the fire, Pazzini seemed shrunk to but half his normal size, a mere rack of clothes, two lean white hands, that gripped the dragons' heads upon the arms of the fauteuil, and a pale stern face that looked into the smouldering embers, and beyond — immeasurably beyond.

"How did it happen?" he asked, after a time.

"Shall I ever know?" broke out de Villerssexel irritably. "Pépin had been to a children's party below there on the entresol, at the English lawyer's. He and his imbecile of a *bonne* were entering the ascenseur. She goes from spasm to spasm, so there is no telling. But it seems they had given Pépin a toy — the English — and she wished to carry it and he refused. So between them — God knows how! — it slipped from their hands as the ascenseur cleared the gate — and Pépin stooped to catch it — and fell. He died at midnight."

There was a long silence, broken only by the snapping of the logs in the fireplace and the

almost inaudible footfalls of the Comte on the thick carpet. Then —

“He was his mother’s son,” said Pazzini.

“And mine,” replied the other. “The last of the de Villersexel.”

He paused abruptly by a little table, and took up a handful of splintered wood and tangled catgut.

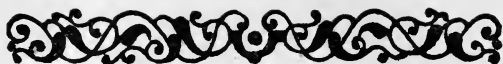
“The toy that killed him,” he added in a low voice, and hurled the fragments over Pazzini’s shoulder into the embers. A thin tongue of flame caught at them as they fell, and broke into a brilliant blaze. Pazzini leaned forward suddenly and peered at the little conflagration.

“A violin,” he said.

“A violin,” echoed the Comte. “Think of dying for a violin!”

Pazzini made no reply. His eyes had met those of the portrait over the chimney — and he was smiling.





## The Tuition of Dodo Chapuis

THE situation was best summed up in the epigram of little Sacha Vitzoff, the second secretary at the Russian Embassy, who said that there was room enough in Paris for two and a half millions of people *and* Gabrielle de Poirier, or for two and a half millions of people *and* Thaïs de Trémonceau, but that even the place de la Concorde was not sufficiently wide for Gabrielle and Thaïs to pass without treading on each others' toes.

It was a rivalry of long standing, nourished by innumerable petty jealousies and carefully

treasured affronts. Gabrielle was tall and very slender, with a clear, pale complexion, and hair of a curious dark bronze that in certain lights showed a hint of olive green. So Thaïs called her the Asparagus Woman — *la Femme Asperge*. Thaïs was short and anything but slim, and brown of hair, eyes, and skin. So Gabrielle called her the Mud-Ball — *la Boule de Boue*. And neither appellation was pleasing to the object thereof.

These two great luminaries of the Parisian demi-monde, blazing crimson with mutual jealousy, followed, for six months of the year, a kind of right-triangular orbit, comprising the restaurant of Armenonville, the race-course of Auteuil, and the Café de Paris, and embracing divers other points of common interest, — the Palais de Glace, of a Sunday afternoon, the tea-room of the Elysée Palace Hotel, the Follies-Marigny, the Salon, and the Horse-Show ; and, individually, Gabrielle's apartment on the avenue Kléber, and Thaïs's little hôtel on the rue de la Faisanderie. Between the last two, as regards situation, cost, and general equipment, there was not a straw's weight of difference, save in the estimation of their respective

occupants. The apartment had been rented for a term of years, and furnished and decorated, and supplied with four servants, by a Russian millionaire, and the same was true of the hôtel in every, save one, detail, — the de Trémonceau's millionaire was a Brazilian. For the rest, Gabrielle was of a literary bent, and wrote occasional feuilletons for the *Journal*, and short stories, staggering with emotion, for the *Gil Blas Illustré*: something which, in the opinion of Thaïs, was stupid and all there was of the most ignoble. Thaïs herself was a sporadic feature at the Folies-Bergère, where she sang songs of a melody and a propriety equally doubtful, bunching up her silk skirts at the end of the refrain, with her side toward the audience, and winking, with brazen effrontery, at a spot midway between the heads of the bald gentleman in the third row and the wide-eyed little St. Cyrien across the aisle. The which Gabrielle found to be the trade of a camel.

Each had her horses, and her carriage, in which she was whirled three times up and three times down the allée des Acacias each noon of the season, and again at five o'clock, and each spent hours daily in the rue de la Paix, trailing

long skirts of tulle and satin before the mirrors of the men-milliners, and pricing strings of pearls in the private offices of servile jewelers. Each was deftly veneered, as it were, with the bearing of the grande dame, except at the moment when she chanced to pass the other, or refer to her in the course of conversation. Then the irrepressible past came suddenly to the fore in a word or a gesture, which babbled of Gabrielle's early experience in the work-room of the very Paquin she was now patronizing, and of Thaïs's salad days as assistant to a florist on the grand boulevards.

Honors were even between the two when Dodo Chapuis first came up to pay homage to the queen capital, of which he had been dreaming for four years. He was only nineteen, the son of a great manufacturer of Arles, who had lived severely and frugally, and, dying a widower, left a cool half million of francs to be divided between Dodo and his sister Louise. There seems to have been no trace of doubt in the mind of either as to the respective uses to which their dazzling inheritances should be applied. Louise promptly accepted a young playwright with a record of fourteen rejected

revues, to whose suit her father had been most violently opposed ; and Dodo, as promptly, took out a letter of credit for fifty thousand francs and departed for Paris on the morning following the funeral.

The story of Dodo's first six weeks in the capital is the story of full a million of his kind. A pocket filled with gold and a mind emptied of responsibility ; youth, health, and craving for the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, — these foundations given, the aspect of the structure erected thereupon is inevitable.

Dodo made his *début* at the Moulin Rouge at eight o'clock on the evening of his first day in Paris. Despite appearances, this did not mean that he was wholly a fool. One must remember that it was the evening of the first day. He walked leagues, it seemed to him, around the crowded promenade, half stifled by an atmosphere composed of equal parts of stale beer, cigarette smoke, and cheap perfumery. He watched a quadrille made up of shrill shrieks, rouge, and an abundance of white lace. He tossed balls into numbered holes in a long board, and won a variety of prizes of pseudo-Japanese make, which he immediately pre-

sented to the exponents of the aforesaid quadrille. He squandered a louis in firing a rifle at paper rabbits passing in monotonous succession over three feet of sickly green hillside. He bought a citronade for a girl with blue eyes, and a menthe glaciale for another with brown ; and, at the end, rebuffing the proffered services of a guide, who, by reason of his new tan overcoat, and to his intense disgust, addressed him in English, he returned to the Hôtel du Rhin in a state of profound despondency.

But that, as we have said, was on his first evening. On the third, he had engaged a table in advance at Maxim's, and supped in state on caviar, langouste à l'Américaine, and Ruinart. *And* with Antoinette Féria. It was not much of an achievement, but it showed progress.

On the following day Dodo went to Auteuil, won twelve francs fifty on a ten-franc bet, and dined at Armenonville. It was here that Suzanne Derval looked cross-eyed at him, fingered her pearls, and remarked that he had beaux yeux. Dodo might be said to be fairly launched.

It would be superfluous to note the further stages of his initiation. They were strictly

conventional, and, under the circumstances, it was remarkable that, at the end of six weeks, he had drawn but seven thousand francs on his letter of credit, and still retained his enthusiasms. It is not every one from the provinces for whom Paris reserves her supreme surprise for the forty-third day.

It chanced to be the first evening of the de Trémonceau's annual engagement at the Folies-Bergère, and for three days the eloquent legend "La Belle Thaïs" had been glaring at the boulevard throngs in huge block letters from the posters on the colonnes Morris. Dodo, meanwhile, had made many friends among men of tastes similar to his own — a feat which is curiously easy of accomplishment in Paris, when one has forty-odd thousand francs and a desire for company. Of these was Sacha Vitzoff, who, on occasion, had five louis, and invariably spent them at once upon his friends, before he should be tempted to put them to a worse use.

So Sacha bought the box, and they sat, five of them, through two hours of biograph, and trained dogs, and Neapolitan ballet, until the liveried attendants thrust cards bearing the

number 19 into rococo frames at the side of the proscenium, and the orchestra plunged into Sarasate's "Zapateado," and various stout gentlemen wrestled with mechanical devices for supplying opera-glasses, and, conquering, sat back in their seats and grunted. Then the drop rose upon a pale pink and gray libel on Versailles, and La Belle Thaïs flashed out from the wing, with a red silk scarf bound about her head and a toreador's hat perched on one side.

There was no denying it. Despite her rouge, despite her four decades (an eternity in Paris), La Thaïs was very beautiful. Dodo forgot his cigarette, his champagne, and his companions. He followed every swish of her spangled skirts, every click of her castanets, every tap of her pointed shoes, every movement of her gleaming shoulders and her lithe, white arms. This, then, was the reality of his dream, the soul and substance of his vision, the essence of the great city that had drawn him like a magnet from his humdrum bourgeois life in the suburbs of Arles, — the ineffable, eternal Woman, poured like oil upon the smouldering fire of boyish imagination! His slender hands gripped the plush of the box-rail feverishly, his eyes



widened and brightened, his lips parted, and his breath came short. Then, suddenly, there was a final clash of tambourines and castanets which brought La Belle Thaïs to a standstill, her head flung back, and one arm high in air!

"She has charm — even now!" said Sacha, emptying his glass.

Three days later, it was known to all the world that concerns itself with such things that Dodo Chapuis was latest in the train of victims to the fascinations of Thaïs de Trémonceau. One cannot pretend to say what she saw in him to divert her attention from richer and maturer men. He was handsome — yes — but the Comte d'Ys was handsomer. He was rich, as such things go, and for the moment. But he had no wit, poor Dodo — and as for money, which, after all, is the only other thing which counts in the demi-monde, what were forty thousand francs to one authorized to draw, *ad libitum*, upon a Brazilian multi-millionaire? No, evidently, it was one of those strange whims to which the slaves of self-interest are sometimes subject. The de Trémonceau had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, for, certainly, her Brazilian miché would have been ill pleased

to know that Dodo Chapuis was riding daily six times up and six times down the allée des Acacias in the victoria of La Belle Thaïs. As it chanced, he was in Buenos Ayres. Still, he might return without warning. He had an ignoble habit of doing that. But when those sufficiently intimate suggested this to Thaïs she only laughed, and sang a snatch from La Belle Hélène : —

*“ Si par mégarde il se hasarde  
De rentrer chez lui tout à coup,  
Il est le maître, mais c'est, peut-être,  
Imprudent et de mauvais goût ! ”*

As for Dodo, he was in Elysium. He was singularly innocent, Dodo, with his smooth russet hair, and his steady gray eyes, and his straight, fine nose, and his sensitive, patrician mouth ; and, believe it or not as you will, he cherished the project of marrying Thaïs de Trémonceau ! He had fed himself on the poetry of Alfred de Musset, giving doubtful words and phrases his own interpretation, from lack of experience, and, despite the lesson of “ Don Paez ” and “ La Nuit d'Octobre,” he believed in the power of trust to hold another true. Alas, he was hopelessly conventional !

There is no one of us poor moths who is content with seeing his fellow singe his wings. No, each must plunge into the radius of consuming heat and learn its peril for himself. All of which is, no doubt, a wise ruling. For if experience could be handed down from father to son, and accepted on its face value, then the child of the third or fourth generation would be a demi-god, or even a full one, and there would be no further attraction in heaven, and no further menace in hell. The which morsel of morality may be allowed to pass, if only for contrast's sake. We were speaking of Thaïs de Trémonceau.

Dodo's Elysium lasted longer than such mirages are wont to do. For a full month he basked in the sultry sunshine of the de Trémonceau's smiles, dined almost nightly in the rue de la Faisanderie, occupied a fauteuil at the Folies while she whisked her spangled skirts and sang "Holà ! Holà !" to Sarasate's music, supped with her afterwards at the Café de Paris or Paillard's, and paid the addition, and tipped the garçon, and the maître d'hôtel and the chef d'orchestre, as liberally as if he had had a million francs instead of a dwindling twenty thou-

sand. And the delirium might have lasted even longer had it not been for Louise Chapuis.

No one ever knew who told. There is a wireless telegraphy in such cases which defies detection. Suffice it to say that, one morning, the Hôtel de Choiseuil numbered Mademoiselle Chapuis among its guests, and that, as this name was inscribed upon the register, the Fates rang up the curtain on the final act of the brief comedy of the tuition of Dodo Chapuis.

Where, when, and how Louise contrived, in three days of Paris, to strike, full and firm-fingered, the keynote of the situation remained a mystery which none of those concerned was capable of solving. In all the capital there was but one person competent to deal conclusively with the situation. That person was Gabrielle de Poirier, and to Gabrielle de Poirier Louise Chapuis applied.

There could have been no stranger meeting than this between the young Arlésienne, with her blue eyes, and her embarrassed hands, and her gown that all the plague turned to look at, because it was in the fashion of more than yester-year, and the cold, stately leader of the

demi-monde, with her air of languid ease, her shimmer of diamonds, and her slow, tired voice, roused to interest for the moment by this singularly sudden and imperative demand upon her good-will and ingenuity.

Louise found Gabrielle half buried among the cushions of a great divan, with a yellow-backed novel perched, tent-like, upon her knee. For once, the demi-mondaine was alone, bored to extinction by the blatant ribaldry of Octave Mirbeau. She had fingered the simply-lettered card of her unknown visitor for a full minute, before bidding her valet-de-pied admit her. A whim, a craving for novelty — who knows what? The Open Sesame had been spoken, and now, in the half-light of late afternoon, her caller stood before her.

“Be seated,” said Gabrielle courteously.  
“Be seated, Ma—?”

“— Demoiselle,” replied Louise, complying with the invitation.

There was a brief pause. Each woman studied the other curiously. Then Louise began to speak, at first timidly.

“You think it strange, no doubt, madame, this visit of mine. Let me be quite candid.

I come to ask a favor of you — I, who have no right, save the right of one woman to crave assistance from another. I have a brother ” —

“Faith of God !” said Gabrielle, lightly, “so have I. A poor sample, if you will !”

Her flippancy seemed suddenly to lend the other fresh courage. She leaned forward eagerly, clasping her gray-gloved hands upon her knee.

“But mine,” she said, “is but a boy. He has come to Paris, seeking to know the world, and, lately, he has become the friend of Mademoiselle Thaïs de Trémonceau.”

“Zut !” put in Gabrielle. “You say well that it is but a boy !”

“Is there need to tell you,” continued Louise, without heeding the sneer, “what this means to me ? Is there need to tell you what it means to *him* ?”

“My faith, no !” said Mademoiselle de Poirier. “It is acquainted with me, that story. The end is not beautiful !”

“Tout simplement,” said her visitor, “I have come to Paris to bring him back, to show him the folly of his way. But I alone am powerless. You — you who are more admired, more

beautiful, more clever than this Mademoiselle de Trémonceau" — (Oh, Louise!) — "you alone can aid me to rescue him."

Gabrielle raised her eyebrows slightly, and let her lids droop with an air of unutterable boredom.

"Truly, mademoiselle," she drawled, "I neither see in what fashion I can assist you, nor why, in any event, I should concern myself with this affair. If your brother has such taste" —

"Oh, madame, I know I have no right," broke in Louise. "But you, of all women in Paris, alone have the power to win him from her."

"And when I have won him," demanded Gabrielle, "what then? Do you think your precious brother will fare better with me than with the de Trémonceau?"

Her calm was broken for a moment by a flash of anger.

"The world is full of fools," she added. "One more or less is no great matter. I am not a Rescue Society, mademoiselle. Let your brother go his way. His best cure will be effected by the woman herself. When his money

is gone, there will be no need to win him from her."

The sneer sent the blood racing to the other's cheeks. She had been counting, as she realized with a pang of mortification, upon some Quixotic quality which her reading had taught lay always dormant, even in such a woman as Gabrielle de Poirier, — some innate nobility, ready to spring into activity at the bidding of such an appeal as she had just made. And, too, beneath all her anxiety, she had believed that Thaïs loved her brother, that his peril lay not so much in her making use of him and then flinging him aside, as in the existence of actual affection between him and a woman whom, even as his wife, society would not recognize. This brutal intrusion of money into the discussion, this flippant classification of Dodo with a world full of fools who flung away honor and reputation for a passing fancy, only to be flung away themselves in turn, suddenly seemed to lay clear the whole situation, in all its sordid vulgarity, and with the revelation came a white rage against this woman who was only another of the same kind. She despised herself for having stooped to ask her aid, and a fury of wounded pride blazed in her reply.



“You know yourself well, madame!” she said. “No, surely my brother would fare no better with you, though that was not what I meant to ask. I thought, in my folly, that, perhaps, in the life of such a one as you, there might come moments when you longed to be other than you are, moments when you would like to think that among all the men you have played with, ruined, and spurned, there were one or two who could speak and think of you as men speak and think of honest women, who could say that you had been an ennobling influence in their lives, and whose word would count upon the side of good when you come to answer for the evil you have done. I thought that, not for money’s sake or vanity’s, you might wish to win my brother from this woman, and, when you had won him, teach him how sordid, how wicked, how futile such a life is, and send him back to decency — a better man! I see how mistaken I was in judging you. There is no compassion in you, no nobler instinct than self-interest. Your motives are the same as hers, love of admiration and love of gold, — and, perhaps, less worthy. I cannot say. Hers, at least, I can only suspect: yours

I have had from your own lips. Had my brother been more than the poor weak boy he is, had he been brilliant, powerful, or a millionaire, it would never have been necessary for me to ask you to win him from her. No, madame, for you would have done so of your own accord!"

Now, there is such a thing as diplomacy, and there is such a thing as luck, and of the former Louise Chapuis had not an atom. An impulse, made apparently reasonable by pure imagination, led her to seek out Gabrielle, and had she found her, as her fancy had painted her, readily moved by the appeal of honest affection and confidence, she was competent to have won her end. Louise was one of the people who, in foreseeing a dispute, invent the replies to their own questions, and who, if the actual answers accord with those preconceived, will emerge from the ordeal triumphant, but who lack the diplomat's gift of adapting the line of argument to that of unexpected retort. Confronted with a state of affairs wholly different from that which she had supposed existent, her sole resource was in this outburst of disappointment and reproach, honest, but

inutile as the clamor of a baffled baby. So much for diplomacy.

But, as we have said, there is also such a thing as luck. Gabrielle de Poirier was insufferably bored. Her Russian was in Moscow, her recent tips at Auteuil had proved disastrous, her latest feuilleton had been rejected. For six hours she had been buried among the cushions of the divan, clad materially in light pink but mentally in deepest blue, skipping from page to page of a novel that was not amusing, and confronted every ten minutes by the recurrent realization that the next event on her calendar was a dinner at the Café de Paris, which would not come for the eternity of twenty-seven hours! Despite her ungracious reception of Louise, she had been grateful for the diversion, and hardly had she sneered at Dodo's position before she lit a cigarette, and fell to studying the situation seriously. Louise, pausing, breathless, after her tirade, was surprised to find that she made no reply, looking straight before her with her great eyes half closed, and put down her silence as equivalent to admission of the charges hurled against her. The truth of the matter

was, however, that Gabrielle had not heard one word of her visitor's impassioned denunciation !

There was a long silence, and then the demimondaine looked up.

"Where does your brother live?" she asked, touching an electric button at her side, "and what is his first name?"

"At the Hôtel du Rhin," stammered Louise, "and his name is Do—I should say Charles, — Charles Chapuis. I am at the Hôtel de Choiseuil."

"Bon!" said the other. "If you will go home, mademoiselle, and keep your own counsel, I think I can promise you that you will shortly have your brother back."

Louise stepped forward impulsively.

"Oh, madame!" — she began.

But just then the valet-de-pied appeared at the door, and Gabrielle, taking up her novel, flounced back among the cushions.

"Bon jour, mademoiselle," she said, without looking at Louise. "Achille, la porte! And send Mathilde to me."

The conference between mistress and maid was brief but eloquent.

"Who," demanded Gabrielle, "is Dodo Chapuis?"

"The young monsieur of Boule-de-Boue," responded Mathilde promptly.

"Parfaitement. I needed to refresh my memory. And how long is it since we cabled the last tuyau?"

"Eight weeks, at least, madame — before the coming of Monsieur Chapuis."

"Bon!" said Gabrielle. "We cable another tip at once."

(For it may be noted, in passing, that she had one source of income which La Belle Thaïs little suspected!)

"What does Boule-de-Boue do to-night?" she demanded again.

"Dines at home with Monsieur Chapuis," replied the omniscient Mathilde, "dances at the Fol' Berg' at eleven, sups at Paillard's with Monsieur Chapuis."

(For it may also be noted, in passing, that the maid of La Belle Thaïs had one source of income which her mistress totally ignored!)

"Très bien!" said Gabrielle. "Now a pen and paper, the inkstand, envelopes, sealing wax, and a telegraph form, and write as I tell thee."

For ten minutes Mathilde wrote rapidly, and then spread the results of her exertions out before her, in the shape of two notes and a cablegram, and read them aloud triumphantly. The first note was directed to Monsieur Charles Chapuis, at the Hôtel du Rhin, place Vendôme : —

“ If Monsieur Chapuis is a man of honor,” it ran briefly, “ he will break all engagements, “ however important, for this evening, and pre-  
“ sent himself chez Mademoiselle Gabrielle de  
“ Poirier at seven o’clock, on a matter inti-  
“ mately touching the good fame of his family.  
“ The sister of Monsieur, Mademoiselle Louise  
“ Chapuis, is chez Mademoiselle de Poirier.”

The second note was addressed to Mademoiselle Thaïs de Trémonceau, at 27 bis, rue de la Faisanderie.

“ A friend advises Mademoiselle Thaïs de  
“ Trémonceau that Monsieur Charles Chapuis  
“ dines with Mademoiselle Gabrielle de Poirier  
“ this evening at half past seven.”

And the cablegram was to Señor Miguel Cevasco, Reconquista 21, Buenos-Ayres, République Argentine.

“ 19 rides in the carriage of 52. 26.”

The point of which observation lay in the fact that Dodo confessed to nineteen, and Señor Miguel to fifty-two, and Gabrielle to twenty-six.

It was a bold play, and one foredoomed to failure unless each link in the chain held true. But Mademoiselle de Poirier was no novice, and experience had long since taught her that success is the child of audacity ; so, ten minutes later, Achille was speeding, in one cab, toward the place Vendôme, pausing only at the bureau de télégraphe on the corner of the rue Pierre Charron and the avenue Marceau, and Mathilde was speeding in another toward the rue de la Faisanderie : and Gabrielle herself was making life not worth living for Louis, her long-suffering maître-d'hôtel.

The upshot of this triple commotion was that, as the clock on her mantel struck seven, Mademoiselle Gabrielle de Poirier was posing on a chaise-longue in correct imitation of David's "Madame Récamier," except for a wonderful black gown, when Achille announced Monsieur Charles Chapuis.

Dodo entered the room in immaculate evening dress, but with a touch of embarrassment

in his manner which betrayed his years. He was good to look upon, was Dodo, tall, straight, and slight, with the ruddy olive skin, the firm, square fling of chest and shoulder, the narrowness of waist, and the confident swing of long, slender, but sinewy legs with which one is blessed at nineteen in Bouches-du-Rhône. Gabrielle, taking note of him from under her covert, languid lids, was compelled, for once, to mental candor.

"I comprehend Thaïs," she said to herself, but to Dodo, "Monsieur, I felicitate you. You have the true spirit of chivalry."

"My sister" — began Dodo.

"Is, no doubt, at the Hôtel de Choiseuil," answered Gabrielle, coolly, fanning herself. "In any event she is not here. Oh, she *was* here — yes ; but she had gone — gone *before* I sent you the note. Be seated, monsieur."

Dodo selected a chair, dropped into it, and awaited developments in silence. Six weeks before, he would have demanded in a passion the meaning of this subterfuge. But whatever might be said of La Belle Thaïs, one learned diplomacy in her company.

"You are surprised, monsieur !"



"I am infinitely surprised, madame," he agreed, with charming candor.

"Shall we be frank with each other?" asked Gabrielle, pleasantly.

"I think it is the only way," said Dodo. "Eh bien, I am infinitely surprised, madame; first, to see my sister's name in connection with yours at all, and, second, to find that you have been lying to me."

"She came to ask me to rescue you from the toils of Thaïs de Trémonceau."

Despite his elaborate self-control, Dodo flushed crimson.

"I think we had best drop the discussion here," he said, rising. "There can be no possible profit in continuing it. If my sister was here at all" —

"Her card is there on the table," put in Gabrielle, pointing with her fan.

"Pardon. I should not have permitted myself the insinuation. I accept your statement, and simply say that it was an unwarrantable intrusion on her part. For you, madame, I have only admiration. Your compliance" —

"It was not that," said Gabrielle, shortly. "I can conceive of nothing less important to

me than your sister's wishes. But I dislike Mademoiselle de Trémonceau."

"That," said Dodo, with exaggerated courtesy, "can only be a matter of opinion. *I* admire Mademoiselle de Trémonceau enormously."

"The force of admiration is undoubtedly strong," snapped Gabrielle, "to reconcile you to riding in another man's carriage, drinking another man's wine, dawdling with another man's" —

"Assez!" said Dodo.

Gabrielle shrugged her shoulders.

"Quite right," she said. "You are old enough to see for yourself. I presume you will not return to her."

"On the contrary, I shall be with her in fifteen minutes."

In the distance an electric bell whirled.

"Sooner than that, I think," smiled Gabrielle, and then La Belle Thaïs was standing at the salon door. She was gowned in scarlet, with a poppy flaring in her hair, and, if she had but lent to her dance at the Folies but half the fury of that entrance, the manager would, no doubt, have tripled her already ample salary.

And, at the instant of her appearance, as if by signal, — which indeed it was, — Louis flung wide the opposite door, with a stately “*Monsieur et madame sont servis*,” and there, gleaming with spotless napery, silver shaded candlesticks, and shimmering cut glass, was the daintiest of tables, set for two !

What Thaïs did and what she said, this is not the time or place to detail. She was not wanting in vocabulary, the *de Trémonceau*, nor sparing thereof in an emergency. A decade of careful training fell from her like a discarded mantle, and she became in an instant the vulgar-tongued *fleuriste* of the boulevards. From her *chaise-longue* Gabrielle smiled calmly, the picture of a new Circe, rejoicing in the success of her spells. And, between the two, Dodo, his hands clenched until the knuckles shone white, turned sick with contempt and loathing. At the end Thaïs flung him an unspeakable taunt, and there was a pause. Then, —

“Do you play the black or the red, *mon-sieur* ?” asked Gabrielle, sweetly, with a glance at her own gown and another at the *de Trémonceau*’s.

Dodo let his eyes run slowly, contemptu-

ously, from the topmost ripple of her bronze hair to the point of her satin slipper, with the felicitous inspiration of seeming to take stock of her charms and to be not over-pleased therewith. Then, —

“I continue my game, madame!” he said.  
“I play the red.”

It was the last, faint cry of youthful chivalry, disillusioned, blotted out, and it was wasted on Thaïs de Trémonceau.

“Tu penses, salaud!” she broke in, with a laugh. “Well, then, thou art well mistaken. Rien ne va plus!”

“He will come back to me!” she cried to her rival, as the door closed behind him.

“Perhaps,” agreed Gabrielle, “but only to leave you again, in a fashion more mortifying for him and more calamitous for you. I sent a cable to Buenos Ayres this afternoon.”

She was deliberately flinging away the aforementioned source of income, for the sake of seeing a certain expression on the face of La Belle Thaïs. But when she saw it, she was well content. For the honors were no longer even.

On the avenue Kléber, Dodo hailed the first

cab that passed, and flinging a curt "Hôtel de Choiseuil—au galop!" to the cocher, blotted himself into one corner, and covered his face with his hands.

"It was my first, but it shall be my last confidence in woman," he said. It was neither strictly original nor strictly true, this, but it showed progress.

For there is such a thing as diplomacy and there is such a thing as luck, and the fact that his sister had not an atom of the former made no difference whatever in the tuition of Dodo Chapuis.



## Le Pochard

**H**IS applicability was evident to the mind of Jean Fraissigne from the moment when the camelot placed Le Pochard on a table in front of the Taverne, and he proceeded to go through his ridiculous pretense of drinking from the cup in his left hand which he filled from the bottle in his right. Jean, who was dawdling over a demi, and watching the familiar ebb and flow of life on the Boul' Miche', was at first passively pleased at the distraction provided by the appearance of the toy, and then, of a sudden, consumedly absorbed in the progress of his operations. For

what was plain to any but a blind man was the fact that Le Pochard was the precise counterfeit of Jean's friend and comrade, Grégoire — Grégoire, with his flat-brimmed hat, and his loose working blouse, and his loud checked trousers — Grégoire, hélas ! with his flushed face, and his tremulous hands, and his unsteady walk, as Jean had seen him a hundred times !

Le Pochard staggered to and fro upon the marble-topped table, nodding maudlinly, and alternately filling his cup and raising it uncertainly to his expressionless face. At last, weakened by his exertions, he passed one arm through the handle of Jean's demi, hesitated, and then leaned heavily against the glass and stood motionless, with his topheavy head bent forward, and his eyes fixed on the price-mark upon the saucer below. This eloquent manœuvre, so unspeakably appealing, determined the future ownership of Le Pochard. Jean purchased him upon the spot, and bore him off in triumph to the rue de Seine, as an object lesson for Grégoire Caubert.

The two students shared a little sous-toit within a stone's throw of the Beaux-Arts,

neither luxuriously nor yet insufficiently furnished. It was Jean's good fortune to have a father who believed in him — not a usual condition of mind in a provincial merchant whose son displays an unaccountable partiality for architecture — and, what was more to the point, who could afford to demonstrate his confidence by remittances, which were inspiring, if not on the score of magnitude, at least on that of regularity. And, since freedom from pecuniary solicitude is the surest guarantee of a cheerful spirit, there was no more diligent pupil at the Boîte, no blither comrade in idle hours, — above all, no more loyal friend, in sun or shadow, throughout the length and breadth of the Quartier, than little Jean le Gai, as he was called by those who loved him, and whom he loved.

That was why the comrades were at a loss to understand his friendship for Grégoire Caubert. Had the latter been one of themselves, a type of the schools, in that fact alone, whatever his peculiarities, would have lain a reason for the association. But, to all intents and purposes, he was of another world. His similarity to Jean and to themselves began and



ended with his costume. For the rest he was silent and reserved, courting no confidence and giving none, unknowing and unknown to the haunts they frequented, — the Deux Magots, the Escholiers, the Taverne, the Bullier, and Madame Roupique's in the rue de Beaune, and the Rouge on Thursday nights. Jean le Gai, when questioned as to the doings of Grégoire, seemed to reflect something of his friend's reserve. He admitted that the other wrote : he even went so far as to prophesy that some day Grégoire would be famous. Further, he made no admissions.

“Diable!” he said. “What does it matter? He goes his way — I go mine. And if we choose to live together, whose concern is it then, I ask you? Fichez-moi la paix, vous autres!”

So popular curiosity went unsatisfied, so far as Grégoire was concerned, and the apparently uncongenial ménage came, in time, to be looked upon as one of the unexplained mysteries of the Quartier, — one, for the rest, which made no particular difference to any one save the two immediately concerned.

But if Jean made no admissions as to

Grégoire, it was not for lack of sufficient knowledge. They had met, as men meet in the Quartier, — as bubbles meet in a stream, and, for reasons not apparent, are drawn together by an irresistible attraction, and fuse into one larger, brighter bubble than either has been before. For little Jean Fraissigne, whose exquisses were the wonder of the School, and whose projets had already come to be photographed and sold in the shops of the rue Bonaparte and the quai Conti, believed in his heart that architecture was as nothing compared to literature, and Grégoire, whose long, uphill struggle had been unaccompanied by comradely admiration or even encouragement, found indescribable comfort, in the hour of his success, in the faith and approbation of the friend who alone, of all men, knew his secret, — knew that the René de Lys of the “*Chansons de Danaé*” and the “*Voyage de Tristan*” of which all Paris was talking, was none other than himself — Grégoire Caubert, on whose wrist the siren of absinthe had laid a hand that was not to be shaken off, and whom she was leading, if by the paths of subtlest fancy and almost miraculous creative faculty, yet toward

an end inevitable on which he did not dare to dwell.

To Jean, healthy, rational, and cheerful as a young terrier, much that Grégoire said and did was totally incomprehensible, but what he did not understand he set down, with conviction, to the eccentricity of genius. The long nights which he spent alone, sleeping sanely in their bedroom in the rue de Seine, while Grégoire's cot stood empty beside him, and Grégoire himself was tramping the streets of Paris ; the return of his friend in the first faint light of dawn, pale-faced and swaying ; the succeeding hours which, despite his exhaustion, he spent at his desk, feverishly writing, and tossing the pages from him, one by one, until the floor was strewn with them on all sides ; finally, his heavy slumber far into the afternoon, — all this, to Jean, was but part and parcel of that marvelous thing called literature. He returned at seven to find that Grégoire had prepared a wonderful little meal, and was walking up and down the floor, unevenly, absinthe in hand, awaiting his arrival.

In the two hours which followed lay the keynote of their sympathy. It was then that

Grégoire would read his work of the early morning hour, to Jean, curled up on the divan, with his hands clasped behind his head and his eyes round and wide with delight and admiration. What things they were, those fancies that Grégoire had pursued and caught, like night-moths, in the streets of Paris, while stupid folk were sleeping! And how he read them, Grégoire, with his flushed face lit with inspiration, and his eyes flaming with enthusiasm! If only he would not drink absinthe, thought little Jean, and said so, timidly at first, and then more earnestly, as, little by little, the marks of excess grew more plain in his friend. But Grégoire made a joke of this — he who always joked — and in time, Jean came to acquiesce. For he never wholly understood — until afterwards.

So, when nine struck, it was understood that they parted company till the following evening. Jean brought out his drawing board, his T square, and all their attendant paraphernalia, and toiled at his calques with infinite patience and unerring accuracy, until midnight; and Grégoire, having corrected his manuscript here and there, gnawing savagely at his pencil the

while, inclosed it in one of his long envelopes, scrawled "Rédaction du Journal" upon it, stamped it, and went out into the night to mail the old, and seek new moths. And this was all there was to the comradeship which mystified the Quartier, save that the love of Jean for Grégoire and of Grégoire for Jean was as deep and unfaltering as the current of the eternal Seine — and, if anything, more silent !

Jean wound up Le Pochard stealthily, on the landing outside the apartment door, and, entering, placed it suddenly upon the table under the very nose of Grégoire, who stood, sipping his absinthe, in the centre of the room. Le Pochard rocked and swayed, ticking like a little clock, and drinking cup after cup of his imaginary beverage, as if his life depended upon the quantity consumed. Convulsed with merriment at the performance of the preposterous creature, Jean le Gai lay prone upon the divan, kneading the cushions with his fists and kicking his heels against the floor, and Grégoire, a slow smile curling his thin, sensitive lips, seemed to forget even his absinthe until the toy's energy slackened and he paused, with the bottle shaking in his hand, and his eyes, as

usual, bent upon the ground. Then — “Eh b'en — quoi?” said Grégoire, looking up at his friend.

“Mais c'est toi!” burst out the little architect in an ecstasy. “It is thou to the life, my Grégoire! Remark the blouse — what? — and the hat, sale pompier! — and the checked grimant, name of a pipe! But it is thy brother, Le Pochard! — thy twin — thou, thyself!”

And seizing the glass from Grégoire's hand, he carefully filled Le Pochard's cup with absinthe, and set him reeling and swaggering again, so that the immoral little animal spilled the liquid on his blouse, and presently fell headlong, totally overcome, with his nose pressed flat against the table.

Thereafter, it was a comradeship of three instead of two. It was quite in accord with the whimsically fanciful nature of Grégoire that he should take Le Pochard into his affections, and even call him “brother” and “cher confrère.” He treated him, did Grégoire, with marked deference and studied non-observance of his besetting weakness, and he expected and received from Le Pochard a like respect

and indulgence in return. That, at least, was how he described their relations to Jean, and Jean, curled up upon the divan, was never tired of the droll pretense, but would laugh night after night till the tears came, at the common tact and the mutual courtesy of Grégoire and Le Pochard.

Linked by this new, if unstable, bond of sympathy, neither of the friends understood, during the months that followed, that their paths, which had so long lain parallel, were gradually but inevitably diverging. Jean was now wrapped heart and soul in the competition for the Prix de Rome, and, as he said himself, *en charrette* eternally. Even the work of his comrade, which formerly had held him spell-bound, lost for him, little by little, much of its compellant charm. His nimble mind, busy with the stern, symmetrical lines of columns and the intricate proportioning of capitals, drifted imperceptibly away from its one-time appreciation of pure imagery. He returned later at night from the atelier, consumed the meal they ate in common with growing impatience, and was busy with his calques again before Grégoire had fairly finished his coffee.

The evening readings, grown shorter and shorter, were finally abandoned altogether, and, oftener than not, Jean was totally oblivious to the presence of Grégoire, correcting his manuscript at the little desk, or his noiseless departure with the stamped envelope under his arm. Had he been told, he would have denied his defection with the scorn bred by conviction. It was not that he loved his comrade less, but only that the growing promise of the Prix de Rome lay, like the marvel of dawn, on the horizon of the immediate future, blinding his eyes to all beside. For Jean le Gai was finding himself, and in the crescent light of that new and wonderful discovery whatever had been bright before grew tawdry.

Only one evidence remained of what had been. Le Pochard, with his absurd inanity, was yet a feature of every dinner in the rue de Seine, and because Grégoire invented daily some new drollery in connection with their senseless toy, Jean was unaware that things were no longer the same, — that his friend was thinner and more nervous, that the circles had deepened under his eyes, that he said no word of his work. They laughed together



at Le Pochard, and laughed again at their own amusement. So the days went by and still their paths diverged, — Jean's toward the sun-gilt hills of promise and prosperity, Grégoire's toward the valley of shadow that a man must tread alone.

Despite his proclivities, neither foresaw the end of Le Pochard. So gradual was his decline toward utter degradation that the varnish was gone from his narrow boots and his round, weak face, and his simple attire was frayed and worn, before they had remarked the change. Then, one night, as Grégoire wound him, the key turned futilely in the spring. Placed in his accustomed position on the table, Le Pochard made one feeble gesture of surrender with his bottle, one unavailing effort to raise his absinthe to his lips, and, reeling dizzily, crashed down upon the floor, his debauches done with forever.

It was a curious thing that, in the face of this absurdity, neither of the comrades smiled. In some unaccountable fashion Le Pochard had come to be so much a part of their association that in his passing there was less of farce than tragedy. And Jean, looking across

at Grégoire, saw for the first time the pitiful change that had crept into the face of his friend, the utter weariness where restless energy had been, the dullness of the eyes wherein had played imagination, like a will-o'-the-wisp above the slough of destiny. And Grégoire, looking across at Jean, knew that the moment had come, and dropped his glance, ashamed, fingering the tattered clothes of Le Pochard.

"One might have expected it," said Jean, with a smile that was not a smile. "I suppose we must forgive him his faults, now that he is gone. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum!*"

Then, as Grégoire made no reply, he added, "I shall not work to-night. I am tired. *Que veux-tu?* I have been doing too much. So we will sit by the fire, *n'est ce pas, vieux?* And thou shalt read to me as before. *Dieu!* It is a long time since the moths have shown their wings!"

In the tiny grate the cannel coal snapped and spat fretfully, and Jean, buried in the largest chair, winked at the sparks, and, furtively, from the corners of his brown eyes, watched Grégoire reading, half-heartedly, with

the lamp-light cutting sharply across his thin cheek and his temples, on which the veins stood singularly out.

He was no critic, little Jean le Gai, yet even he knew that something had touched and bruised the wings of this latest moth that Grégoire had pursued and caught while stupid folk were sleeping, so that it was not, as had been the others, downed with the shifting brilliance of many unimagined hues, but dull and sombre, like the look he had surprised in the face of his friend. And so subtly keyed were the strings of their unspoken sympathy that night, that a sense of the other's feeling stole in upon Grégoire long before the manuscript was finished, and suddenly he cast it from him into the grate, where the little flames caught at it, and wrapped it round, and sucked out its life, exulting, until it lay blackened and dying, writhing on the coals.

"Why?" said Jean. But he knew.

"Because," answered Grégoire slowly, with his eyes upon the shrunken, faintly whispering ashes of his pages, whereat the sparks gnawed with insatiable greed, "because, my little one, it is finished. What I have done I shall never

do again. Never didst thou wholly understand — least of all in these last days when thy work absorbed thee. If one is to catch night-moths with such a tender touch, and preserve them for other men to see so carefully, that no one little glint of radiance may be missing from their wings, one has need of a clear eye and of a steady hand. Neither is mine. My father, of whom I have never spoken to thee, — my father, who left me this gift of trapping the thoughts that others see not as they fly, yet love and prize when they are caught and pinned upon the page, yet left me a companion curse, — the curse of absinthe, little Jean, that is not to be gainsaid. For as the gift was beautiful, so was it also frail, and as the curse was subtle, so was it also strong. I have seen the end — long, long. Now it is here. My work is finished. The curse has knocked at the door of my body, and, at the signal, the gift has flown forth from the window of my soul.”

He paused, and pausing, smiled.

“Thou didst most nearly understand me, Jean,” he continued, “in buying Le Pochard. For in truth, he was my brother — my twin — my soul, in the semblance of a toy! How we

have laughed at him! Yet all along I have seen myself in that senseless little man of tin. Is it fanciful? *Peut-être bien!* But, now that he is gone, I see that I must go, too, — and in the same way, my Jean, in the same way, — with my absinthe in my hand and the key of inspiration turning uselessly in the broken spring of my heart!”

He rose suddenly, with a shiver, and looked down at Jean le Gai. For an instant he touched him on the hair, and then he was gone into the night, leaving the little architect gazing, wide-eyed and mute, at the crinkling ashes of the last, unworthiest moth of all.

During the days that followed, Le Pochard stood upon the mantel-corner. They no longer touched him, but left him, as it were, a monument to his own folly.

There was no further trace in Grégoire's manner of the mood which had loosed his tongue on the night of his last reading. To Jean, who, in his simplicity stood ready with comfort and encouragement, he seemed to be in need of neither. Plainly, what he had said was but a phase of that strange imagination which had dictated the exquisite pathos of his

“Danaé” and his “Tristan;” and this one thing little Jean had learned, — that his friend lived the moods he wrote, and that oftentimes, when what he said was seemingly most personal, he was posing for his own pen — a painter in speech, drawing from his reflection in a mirror opposite. So the vague alarm aroused by Grégoire’s words died down, and Jean plunged once more into his work.

In those last days of the competition his projet, laboriously builded, detail by detail, leaped into completion with a suddenness startling even to himself. He knew that it was good, — knew so without the surprising enthusiasm of his comrades at the atelier, and the still more surprising commendation of his patron, the great Laloux himself, whose policy was *nil admirari*, whose frown a habit, and whose “Bon!” a miracle. But even Jean le Gai, with all his buoyant optimism, was unprepared in conviction for those words which reverberated, to his ears like thunder, beneath the dome of the Institut.

“Prix de Rome — Jean Fraissigne — Atelier Laloux!”

Would Grégoire *never* come? He asked

himself the question a hundred times as he paced the floor of their living-room an hour before dinner, exulting in the cold roast chicken and the champagne, and the huge Maréchale Niel rose which he had purchased for the occasion. For he was determined, was Jean le Gai, that Grégoire should be the first to know. Was it not Grégoire who had encouraged him all along, who had prophesied success when as yet the projet was no more than an exquisite exquisite, who had laughed down Jean's forebodings, and magnified Jean's hopes a hundred-fold? Yes, evidently Grégoire must be the first to know, before even a bleu should be sent to Avignon to gladden the heart of Fraissigne père !

But when Grégoire came, there was no need to tell him after all. For it was the chicken that shouted Jean's news — the chicken, and the champagne, and the great yellow rose, and, most of all, the face of Jean himself. So it was that Grégoire held out his long, thin arms, wide-spread, and that into them rushed Jean, to be hugged and patted, as he gabbled some things that there was such a thing as understanding and many more that there was not.

“Rome — Rome, think of it! And the paternal — but he will die of joy! Ah, mon vieux, — Rome! The dreams — the hopes — all I have wished for — and now — and now — Ah, mon vieux, mon vieux!”

And so again and again, clamoring incoherently, while Grégoire, holding him tight, could only pat and pat, and say, over and over, —

“It is well, my little brother! My little brother, it is very, very well!”

They dined like princes, these two, pledging each other, laughing, singing, shouting. Never had Jean le Gai so well deserved his name, never had Grégoire been so whimsically droll. Even Le Pochard was restored to his old position and coaxed to repeat his former antics. But it was all in vain. The key refused to catch the spring, and, replaced upon the table, Le Pochard only nodded once or twice with profound melancholy, and stared at little Jean out of his round eyes. Once, Jean thought he caught in the face of his friend a hint of the sadness of that other night, but when he looked again the sadness, if sadness it were, was gone. Grégoire filled his glass, and pledged him anew with a laugh.



“Rome, mon petit frère — Rome !”

At nine, they went out together, Jean to dispatch his bleu and join the comrades at the Taverne — for this was a night to be celebrated with songs and many drained demis — and Grégoire, who knew where?

Who knew where? Only the Seine, perhaps, sulking past the rampart on which he leaned, thinking, thinking, until the gaunt dawn crept up, like a sick man from his bed, behind the towers of Notre Dame; and the shutters of the shops on the quai Conti came rattling down, and the street cries went shrilly through the thin morning air: “Rac’modeur d’faïence et d’por-or-celaine !” or “’Archand de rôbinets ! Tureetutu, tureetututututu !” Then Grégoire went slowly back to the rue de Seine.

Jean spent the succeeding days in a whirl of excitement. There were calls to be made, farewell suppers to be eaten, and all the preparation for departure to be superintended. Fraissigne père sent a joyful letter, and in the letter a substantial draft, so that Jean had two new complets, and shirts, and socks, and shoes, and a brilliantly varnished trunk with his name and address painted in black letters on the end,

— “J. Fraissigne, Villa Medici, Rome.” It was magnificent! In this and a packing case he stowed his clothes and his household gods, though when the latter had been collected, the little apartment in the rue de Seine looked pitifully bare. There were dark squares on the faded red wall-paper, and clean circles in the dust of the shelves, where his pictures and casts and little ornaments had been, but Grégoire only laughed and said that the place had been too crowded before, and that the long-needed house-cleaning was no longer an impossibility.

So, before they realized the fact, the moment of parting was upon them, and the sapin, with Jean's luggage on top, stood waiting at the door. The concierge, wiping her hands upon her blue-checked apron, came out to bid her favorite lodger good-by. A little throng of curious idlers paused on the narrow sidewalk, gaping at the new trunk with the glaring lettering. The cocher was already untying the nose-bag in which his lean brown horse had been nuzzling for fifteen minutes. And, on the curb, arm linked in arm, the two comrades stood watching him, with no courage to meet each other's eyes. For each had a thousand things

---

to say and never a word in which to say so much as one.

At the end, as their hands met, it was only a commonplace that came to Jean's tongue.

"Thou wilt write me, vieux? And in four years — *ce qui va vite*, du reste! — we shall be together once more!"

In four years — in four years — in four years! The words beat dully at Grégoire's temples, as he watched the cab swing round the corner of the Institut toward the quai Malaquais, with Jean's handkerchief fluttering at the window of the portière. Four years — four years — four years! How easy it was to say for one who did not know that the end had come, — that the moths of fancy that fly by night must be caught by others now, that the siren of absinthe was standing ready to claim her own!

Grégoire mounted the stairs slowly, unlocked the door, and stepped into the familiar room, dim now in the last faint light of day. His absinthe stood upon the table, and he took it up, and paused, looking about him. Presently he went forward to the mantel, and, laying one hand upon it, bent forward, peering at a little photograph of Jean which leaned against the

mirror. The woodwork jarred under his touch, and Le Pochard in his corner stirred, ticked feebly, and strove to raise his cup to his lips. Wheeling at the sound, Grégoire met the eyes of the dissipated little toy for a full minute, motionless and silent. Then with a sob, he hurled his glass into the grate, where it was shattered into a hundred fragments, and flung himself on his knees by the divan, with his face buried in his hands.

“Mon frèrot !” he murmured, “my little brother — help me — help me to be strong.”

On the mantle, Le Pochard bent his head and gazed shamefacedly upon the ground.

For his reign was at an end.



## A Latter-Day Lucifer

THE distance between them is far less than is commonly supposed. In fact, they are separated only by a parti-wall. But there is a vast difference in their exteriors, Heaven being gay with silver paint and stucco cherubs, and illuminated by a huge arc-light with a white globe, and Hell all red, with a monster's grinning mouth for entrance, and a ruby lamp.

The two cabarets stand on the boulevard de Clichy, side by side, and, when one is passing through Paris on a Cook ticket, good for a two

weeks' stay, one is taken by an obliging friend of the Colony to see them, and so is enabled to return to the States with the pleasing conviction of having had a glimpse of the true life of Montmartre, — the which is so artistic, and Bohemian, and all that.

It is something, as every one knows, to be an angel in Le Ciel; but it is also something, as every one does *not* know, to be a demon in L'Enfer. Aside from the sentiment of the thing, it is all the same, — harps and halos or horns and hoofs. The clientèle of both places is, for the most part, étrangère, and what is certain is that an American never counts the little money one gives him in change, and that an Englishman disputes it anyway, so that, in the beginning, one might as well be wrong as right, and that a German is unable to tell a louis from a new sou. And a pourboire is a pourboire, whether intentional or otherwise. That is why Maxime Perrot felt himself to be a remarkably fortunate person when, one evening in June, he was suddenly transformed into an angel, as a result of his intimacy with Gustave Robine.

Gustave was two metres twelve in height, which is something so astonishing in itself that

it is not to be wondered at that, for more than a year, he had filled the eminent position of guardian of the gate of Le Ciel, and was much in favor with the management, because of the attention he attracted from the clients. Also, he kept his eyes open, and, moreover, he owed Maxime fifty francs. So, when one of the angels abruptly married a rich widow, and departed for Maisons-Laffitte, to live on her ample rentes, Gustave mentioned the name of his friend and creditor for the vacancy, and, the next day, Maxime became one of the personnel of Heaven, with a fresh pair of wings and new pink fleshings.

Maxime was short and slender, in all except his feet, which were long and large, so long and large, indeed, that he was called l' L Majuscule — the Capital L — by his intimates, and fully merited the nickname when viewed in profile, standing. His experiences in life had been diverse, for, as he himself was wont to say, he cared less for an existence without variety than does a fish for an apple. He had driven a voiture de remise, gorgeous in a green cockade and doeskin breeches: he had been collector for the Banque de France, dismissed,

let charity say not why : and garçon de restaurant, racing to and fro, with a mammoth tray balanced on one upright arm, like a human umbrella : and camelot, hoarsely crying "La Patrie !" in front of the boulevard cafés : and, finally, valet de chambre to Captain the Honorable Michael Douglas, military attaché to the British Embassy. It was in the last capacity that he had learned English, which now he spoke, said Gustave, like a veritable Goddem. That was not the least of the new angel's qualifications. To be sure, it was against all reason that the sales anglais should, under any circumstances, achieve an entrée into Heaven, but then there were many incongruities in connection with Le Ciel, and the fact remained that three out of five, of the clients spoke Angliche, and an angel who could reply to them in their own ignoble argot was, without doubt, an invaluable acquisition.

It cannot be denied that Maxime made a good beginning in Heaven. He entered upon his new duties modestly, and spent a full half-hour of the early evening cleaning the long table in the main hall, dusting the surrounding stools of gold, upon which the chosen were to



sit, and assisting his fellow angels in polishing the liqueur glasses. And it so happened that the first to enter that night was Major Amos E. Cogswell, of the United States Army, who had spent three weeks in Paris at the age of twenty-two, and distinguished himself by demanding, on his second arrival, the way to the Jardin Mabille. With the Major were his two nieces, and their attendant swains, John Selfridge Appleby and P. Hamilton Beck, the latter in narrow-brimmed straw hats, which resembled lids of Japanese tea-pots, and dog-skin walking gloves, turned back at the wrists. The party entered with an air of bravado, and were heard to remark that this was IT, — whatever that might mean. It was Maxime's opportunity, and he improved it to the utmost, seating the newcomers around the head of the table, and demanding, "*Ces messieurs désirent ?*" as if completely oblivious to the fact that they were anything but bred-in-the-bone boulevardiers. For there was need of precaution. It is an inexplicable thing about these English that one is charmed to be addressed in his own tongue, and the next is insulted. It pays to feel one's way.

"What does he say?" said Major Cogswell, turning, helplessly, to P. Hamilton Beck, who had taken French II. at Columbia.

"Wants us to name the drinks," responded that accomplished young gentleman.

"Spik Ingliss?" put in l'L Majuscule, deploying the skirmishers of his vocabulary.

"Tchure!" said Mr. Beck.

"Ah!" replied Maxime, much gratified, "zen v'at eest? V'at veel de zaintlemans aff?"

"Cream de mint," said the Major, promptly, and, his companions agreeing with alacrity, Mr. Beck again undertook the rôle of interpreter.

"Sank cream de mint," he commanded, holding up his left hand, wide-spread, "et toute suite."

And, in a surprisingly brief space of time, five infinitesimal glasses of the green liqueur stood before them.

"Mais avec du glace," remonstrated Mr. Beck.

"What's that; what's that?" inquired the Major anxiously, as the glasses were as suddenly removed by the abashed Maxime.

“Oh, ice, that’s all,” replied the other. “These chaps don’t know what’s what. Leave ’em to me. One has to know how to handle ’em.”

Following the entrance of the Americans, the cabaret had gradually filled. The majority of the places at the long table were occupied now by a curious assemblage of sensation-seekers, — Germans in little cloth hats of dark green, with a curled feather cropping up behind, Englishmen in tweeds and traveling-caps, with visors fore and aft, American architects from the Quartier, so well disguised by slouch felts, pointed beards, and baggy trousers, that only a nasal tang in their slangy French betrayed their nationality, and a sprinkling of Frenchmen, each clasping the hand of a grisette. Already the high-priest of *Le Ciel* was in his gilded pulpit, delivering an oration thickly sown with “*mes sœurs*” and “*mes frères*” and “*chers bénis*,” at which strangers and Parisians alike laughed uproariously, and all for one good reason — because the Frenchmen understood! Maxime returned, bringing the five liqueurs in larger glasses with chopped ice. The head angel made the round of the

table, carrying, on a pole, the gilded image of a pig, and a pseudo-sexton stood leaning on the rail of a celestial stairway leading to the second floor, sprinkling the assemblage with so-called holy water from a colored brush. It was all very French, very conventional, — or unconventional, according to the point of view of the spectator, — very sacrilegious from any point of view.

With that curious instinct of womanhood which seems to recognize the indelicate, even in unfamiliar surroundings, even in an unknown tongue, the younger Miss Cogswell leaned forward suddenly and touched the Major on the hand.

“Let us go,” she said.

“Yes!” agreed Appleby, buttoning his coat, “let’s be moving. What do you say? Let’s go to Hell — I mean,” he added, with a blush, “let’s try the other cabaret.”

The Major agreed with a sigh of relief. He had understood nothing of the mummary going on about him, but he was possessed by the conviction that in some way his party was the butt of the occasion, and had kept looking around abruptly, in hope of catching the angels giggling behind his back.

"Will you ask the waiter how much I owe?"  
He appealed to Beck.

*How much!*

Maxime picked these two essential words out of the rapid phrase like a squirrel snapping a peanut from its shell. He had not been garçon at the Café Américain for nothing, Maxime. His countenance assumed an expression of beatific innocence as he looked over the Major's head, at the high-priest in the gilded pulpit.

"Tain francs," he observed, mildly.

This was a tide in the affairs of P. Hamilton Beck which, plainly, must be taken at the flood. The elder Miss Cogswell was looking at him expectantly, and Heaven had, of a sudden, grown very still. He leaped into the breach with all the eloquence accumulated during eight months of French II.

"Mon foi, non! cream de mint coute seulement un franc la verre dans les établissements plus chers. Il ne faut pas nous voler, parceque nous sont étrangères!"

"What's that; what's that?" said the Major.

"He's trying to rob us," explained Beck,

much excited. "Says it's ten francs. It can't possibly be more than five, and it *ought* to be two francs fifty."

The Major immediately became purple with indignation.

"But, God bless my soul!" he exclaimed, "the rascal understands English as well as any one of us. What's the use of wasting your French on him?"

He swung round upon his stool, and fixed an eye, which was celebrated in the 32d Regular Infantry, upon l'L Majuscule. That worthy surveyed with unfeigned astonishment this very angry, red-faced foreigner, who looked as if he was about to devour him, body and bones. He had not the most remote conception of the effect which his flaxen wig, and his ridiculous wings, and his short pleated tunic, and his pink tights, and his huge feet in their gilded sandals, produced upon the Major; and his attempt at extortion was strictly in line with the traditions of the place. Certainly, it was all very puzzling.

"You ape!" said the Major furiously, finding his breath. "You pinky-panky little scoundrel! *You* an angel? Why you're not even

shaved ! You get two francs fifty, that 's what you get, and not a red cent of porbwure either, you Christmas-tree image ! ”

The exact phrasing of these remarks was somewhat lost upon Maxime, but the general trend of the Major's meaning was quite unmistakable. Nevertheless, when one had been valet de chambre to Captain the Honorable Michael Douglas, one was not routed by a few emphatic words. So Maxime shrugged his shoulders apologetically, and reiterated his “Tain francs.”

“Damn it, sir, *no !*” thundered the Major. “And don't pretend you can't understand me. I 'm a short-tempered man, sir, and — and ” —

He pounded with his fist upon the table, seeking a fitting expression of his rage, until the little liqueur glasses danced like kernels of popping corn. But young Appleby leaned toward him and laid a hand on his arm. He was big and square-shouldered, was Appleby, and, only the year before, he had performed prodigies with the hammer and the shot in the Intercollegiate Games ; but his eyes were very blue and gentle, and he spoke with extreme mildness.

"Don't let us have any trouble here, sir," he said. "It is n't as if we were alone. We have the girls with us, you know. Leave the beggar two francs fifty, and we'll go on to the next place."

Now the Major, with all his fiery temper, was an ardent lover of discipline, and he recognized reason in Appleby's words. So, after an instant, he deposited the amount upon the table, rose to his full height, with his eye still riveted on Maxime, and then, followed by the others, stalked majestically toward the door.

But for one circumstance, the Americans had never gone unmolested past Maxime's fellow-angels, and, in particular, the towering form of Gustave Robine. Maxime himself was astounded that no celestial hand was stretched out to bar their progress. What he did not understand was that, while one may enter Le Ciel on the strength of an accomplishment not possessed by the other immortals, the achievement does not necessarily imply that one is *persona grata* in their eyes, or, in the least degree, sure of their support. The management was responsible for Maxime, and the edict had gone forth that the Angliches were to be turned



over to him. But obedience to this command did not go hand in hand with approval thereof. The high-priest and the sexton and all the angels had looked on sourly, as he appropriated the Major's party, for it is the Americans who give the largest pourboires ; and, although they did not wholly comprehend the dispute which had arisen, it was evident that the linguistic angel had met with disaster at the very outset, and they were proportionately gratified. So, when Maxime glanced about in search of succor, he found himself abandoned in his discomfiture. The other angels were smiling broadly, and nudging each other with their pink elbows ; the high-priest, with his fat hands on the pulpit's edge, was looking down at him with a grin ; the sexton above his head waved his brush to and fro and chanted, "*Ora pro nobis !*" in a high, whining voice. A French student at the further end of the table said "Roulé !" and his companion laughed shrilly. Even Gustave, at the door, was leaning on his halberd and chuckling, for he had not forgotten that Maxime, once sure of his position, had demanded repayment of the fifty francs.

All this was sufficiently intolerable, but a

real disaster, more terrible than mere ridicule, confronted Maxime. The *crème de menthe* was, as a matter of fact, one franc a glass, and it was out of his pocket that the deficit would have to be made good. As this tragic thought smote him full and fair, he bounded forward past the other angels, dodged nimbly under Gustave's outstretched arm, charged through the swinging doors, and emerged with a shout upon the boulevard de Clichy.

The Major's party had paused before the entrance of *L'Enfer*, while Beck parleyed with the courteous demon in scarlet tights who kept the door, and the others stood by, sublimely unconscious of the none too complimentary comments of a half score of cochers and boulevard loungers who surrounded them. Into the midst of this assemblage swooped l'L Majuscule, his flaxen wig awry, his wings bobbing wildly on his shoulders, and his white tunic fluttering in the wind. Blind to consequences, he darted upon the unsuspecting Major, and seized him furiously by the coat.

"Eh! vieille saucisse!" he exclaimed. "Tu te fiches de moi — quoi?"

Now John Appleby had never enjoyed the

advantages of French II., which shed such effulgence upon his classmate, but he knew the answer to this question, none the less. It had been taught him in the boxing-room of his athletic club, and it was surprisingly conclusive when applied to the under jaw of an infuriated angel. The ruby and white arc-lights before the cabarets suddenly joined in a mad waltz, the cabarets themselves turned upside down, the cochers and loungers swooped into the air like pigeons, a passing tram leaped into the trees on the further side of the driveway and disappeared, and, from somewhere, a factory whistle came close up to Maxime's side and said, "*Oo-oo-ooo-oooo !*" in his ear.

He came to himself slowly. There was an acrid taste in his mouth, and this, upon investigation, proved to be boulevard mud. There was something fuzzy gripped tightly in his right hand, and this presently resolved itself into his wings. Then he saw his feet, which were elevated above the level of his head, by reason of being on the curb, while the rest of his person was in the gutter. Then the mammoth red face of a cocher bulged out of the night, close to his own, and a voice said, —

“ Have you harm, angel ? ”

Then he remembered, sat up, and looked around.

On the boulevard de Clichy, spectators grow out of the ground, spontaneously, when there is an excuse for their presence. A hundred or more now surrounded Maxime, with open mouths, and staring eyes that slid to and fro from his prostrate form to the faces of an agent and a vehement gentleman in a frock coat and a flat-brimmed *huit reflets*, who were disputing violently. In the crowd were all the other angels, and the better part of those who had been seated at the table of Heaven. The sexton, brush in hand, was gaping over the agent's shoulder, the high-priest was explaining the affair, with much elaboration, to all who would listen to him, and above the rest towered the face of Gustave Robine, still smiling blandly. The only unconcerned figure in sight was that of a courteous demon in scarlet tights, who was staring up at the sky from the doorway of *L'Enfer*. For Beck had slipped a gold piece into his hand, — as the Major and his party hurried inside, dragging the protesting Appleby by the arm, — and he knew how to

keep his counsel. After all, the sanctity of hospitality must be respected, even in Hell.

"But no, I tell you, but no!" exclaimed the gentleman of the huit reflets, who was none other than the manager of Heaven.

"It is equal to me! It is equal to me!" stormed the agent. "I saw it, do you hear? He was struck, and the law does not allow — They went in there" —

He made a motion, as if to thrust the other aside and plunge toward the entrance of L'Enfer. But the manager of Heaven was not to be thus outdone. He was determined that the incident should be considered closed; and for this there were reasons. It was but the beginning of the tourist season, and the foreign clientèle must not be antagonized. A paragraph in the "Matin," a sensational article in the "Herald" of to-morrow, and the Angliches would believe that the Cabaret du Ciel was no safe place for foreigners to enter. In agonized imagination he saw the gate receipts of Heaven dwindling, disappearing. It were better, far better, to sacrifice Maxime. He grasped the agent by the arm, and pointed to the fallen angel, who was still seated in the gutter,

collecting his scattered wits, with a vacant stare.

“Look you,” he said, persuasively, “this tripe, this species of onion, this example of an eel, is the cause of all. It is I who know, *n’est ce pas?* being his patron. Eh b’en, I assure you that it is a drunkard of the most abandoned. Thirteen times in the dozen, one finds him in the fog, rigid as the Obelisk, *bon Dieu!* not merely lit, *voyons*, but flaming, — as full as Robespierre’s donkey, — asphyxiated! It is not a man, *sac à papier!* It is a sponge — but a sponge, do you understand? — a *pompier!* He dries glasses — *poof!* — like that! *Il lave sa gueule là-dedans*, nothing less!”

“Bravo!” said Gustave Robine, and all the angels applauded. The agent paused, doubtful of what course to pursue, overwhelmed by this burst of eloquence, and Top-Hat, perceiving the impression he had made, addressed himself to Maxime.

“Waffle!” he cried, contemptuously. “Cream of a tart! Thou wast there, then, the day of the distribution, O stupid as thy feet! And who art thou, let us hear, to find thyself in a position to apply kicks to the clients? If

thou wert employed at La Villette, where they slaughter pigs, sacred stove, thy first blow would be suicide ! ”

He rose, in a majestic sweep, to the pinnacle of supreme courtesy.

“ Monsieur le marquis has, perhaps, hurt himself, stumbling by accident ? Is it permitted to the obedient servitor of monsieur le marquis to inquire if monsieur le marquis has sustained any damage by reason of his deplorable mischance ? ”

He descended, in a graceful curve, to the depths of utter scorn.

“ Animal low of ceiling ! Camel ! Gourd ! Ancient senator ! Gas-jet ! Shut thy mouth, or I jump within ! ”

And he paused, — breathless, but triumphant.

It was magnificent ! In the annals of Heaven there was record of no such climax of vituperation. The angels surveyed their patron with undisguised admiration. Even the agent touched the visor of his cap.

“ Monsieur,” he said, “ I yield the field to you. Your vocabulary is unrivaled — unless by General Cambronne ! ”

"Monsieur, you flatter me," replied the other, with a bow.

Some one had helped l'L Majuscule to his feet, and he stood there, a preposterous figure, in soiled pink tights, holding out his wings, with his huge feet turned in like a pigeon's.

"Monsieur le directeur" — he began.

"He speaks!" cried Huit Reflets, whirling around and addressing the throng. "He *dares* to speak, this bad sou, this oyster! He does not comprehend that he is discharged. He counts that I am about to resign in his favor! Ah, non, it is too much!"

He flung himself about again, facing Maxime.

"Well, then," he added with forced calm, "thou art put at the door, is it clear? Take thy rags from yonder, and begone!"

"Mais, monsieur" —

"Oh!" cried the director, flinging his arms upward; and immediately vanished within the silver gates of Heaven, followed by his personnel, with the fallen angel bringing up the rear.

Half an hour later, having exchanged his celestial raiment for his former earthly garb, Monsieur Perrot sat in solitary state at a table



in the café Cyrano, and pondered the details of a project of revenge. The idea had come to him suddenly, like an inspiration, on seeing the nonchalant demon at the portals of L'Enfer, but it required arranging, elaboration. A man who made one blunder was but human, but a man who made two in succession — that was a mere root of celery ! So l'L Majuscule thought hard. And when the will is so earnest, it is strange if the way be not forthcoming. At midnight he arose with a sigh of satisfaction, and took his way homeward, smiling.

It was barely eight o'clock, the following evening, when Maxime entered L'Enfer. He was tastefully dressed in an excessively checked suit and a silk hat, and he wore a full black beard and spectacles, and rolled his r's in speaking, in the fashion of the South. The demon at the door, unsuspecting, greeted him effusively as "cher damné," and piloted him to a table at the further end of the cabaret. The table had a ground-glass top, through which shone electric lights which kept changing mysteriously from green to red and back again, and the whole interior of L'Enfer was of imitation rock, diversified by grinning faces. It was very

artistic, and, what was better, very dark. Maxime was unnecessarily mistrustful of his false beard.

At this early hour, he was the only visitor. An obliging demon supplied him with a green chartreuse, and, upon invitation, procured another for himself, and took the opposite seat.

The conversation, which began with commonplaces, soon assumed a more intimate tone. Monsieur, it appeared, was from Toulouse, but this was not his first visit to L'Enfer. In fact, a place so amusing — what? He never missed it when he came to Paris.

Oh, but monsieur was too good!

No, on the contrary, it was for his own pleasure. It suited him to a marvel, *blague à part*! And often, he had had a curious fancy — to be a demon himself, imagine! To serve in the cabaret for just one evening, by way of variety — for, as for himself, he gave less for a life without variety than did a fish for an apple. That was the reason he had sometimes thought of applying to the management for permission to — but then, of course, the idea was fantastic, and, without doubt, quite impossible.

Oh, quite impossible, monsieur!

But, after all, why not? Not the management, naturally. That was out of the question, it went without saying. But an obliging demon, perhaps — a bon type, who understood these eccentricities, as a man of the world — one who would consent to a brief illness — for one night only — and who would provide a substitute, *in the person of monsieur!* Fantastic — what? — rigolo, mon Dieu! — very rigolo, and, of course, quite impossible.

In some mysterious fashion a louis suddenly made its appearance on the illuminated table.

Oh, quite impossible, monsieur! Evidently, affairs did not arrange themselves like that. Monsieur must understand that the pourboires which one gained in Hell were enormous — but *enormous!* It would be to throw away a fortune, to give up one's place for an entire evening. For forty francs, perhaps — but then it was certain that monsieur would not care —

There was a tiny click upon the table-top, and the one louis had become two. A most surprising place, L'Enfer!

Ah! But in addition, there were details to be arranged, and one could not talk with frankness in the cabaret.

The doors at the further end swung open, and the demon of the gate made his appearance, ushering in a group of tourists. Maxime substituted two francs for the two louis, and rose.

“That for the liqueurs, my friend,” he said, “and what you say is true. The café Cyrano is a better place for talking. At midnight.”

Fifty-seven francs. The project had cost him fifty-seven francs, said the fallen angel to himself, as, twenty-four hours later, he dusted an illuminated table. What with his beard, and his spectacles, and two chartreuses in L’Enfer, and six demis at the café Cyrano — for the conference had been long — and, finally, the bribe to the obliging demon, revenge had cost him fifty-seven francs and it was not yet complete! But the prospects therefor were fair. He chuckled silently, with his eyes on the parti-wall which divided Hell from Heaven. It was eleven o’clock.

Suddenly there was a stir in the cabaret. A voice was calling, “This way, chers damnés, to the Hall of the Infernal Visions!” and the clients were rising from their tables, and crowding out like sheep through a narrow door to

the right. Almost immediately the place was empty, save for the fallen angel and two other demons, clearing away the liqueur glasses, and setting the stools in place. It was the dreamt-of moment. Maxime walked carelessly toward the door.

In *Le Ciel*, the long table was full from end to end. The high-priest in his pulpit was delivering his accustomed discourse with extreme satisfaction, and the head angel making the round of the room, bearing the golden pig upon the pole. The angels, each in his place, abode the moment of the clients' exodus into the Hall of the Celestial Visions, which was coincident with the semi-hourly harvest of *pourboires*. In particular, their eyes were fixed upon a party of American tourists, under direction of a uniformed guide. These were worthy of comment, and received it. It appeared that the thin lady with the loose cloth costume was an empty bed ticking. There were other remarks, but this, from Gustave Robine, was the most successful. However, there were the *pourboires* to be considered, so the angels spoke in whispers.

Of a sudden, the calm of Heaven was broken

by an appalling sound, something midway between a shriek and a bark, and on the end of the table nearest the door appeared a terrible form, black-bearded and all in scarlet, with two long feathers nodding from his cap, and a polished two-pronged pitchfork brandished in one upraised hand. An instant he paused, superbly statuesque, his eyes blazing, an incarnation of demoniac fury. And, as if the sensation produced by his dramatic entrance were not sufficient, the newcomer received unexpected support from the thin lady in loose cloth costume, who, upon his appearance, promptly exclaimed "Good land!" and fell backward off her stool upon the floor.

Then Bedlam broke loose. The doorway of *Le Ciel* is less than a metre in width, and when a score of affrighted tourists, and seven angels, and six French students with their *grisettes*, and a high-priest, and two corpulent Germans, and a sexton, and *Gustave Robine* are suddenly and simultaneously imbued with a desire to sample the air of the boulevard de Clichy, confusion is apt to result. There were shrieks and groans, protestations, oaths in three languages, a wild chaos of legs and arms, wings,

white tunics, traveling caps, tweed suits, and golden stools, and over all pranced the crimson form of the invader, whirling up and down the table with unearthly cries, and kicking the liqueur glasses and little saucers in every direction. They were all agreed, both mortals and celestials, in believing him a madman, and agreed, also, in thinking the pavement of the boulevard a thing greatly to be desired. The demon paused presently, and watched them struggling in a frenzied mass about the door, and then he vanished as abruptly as he had appeared.

For l'L Majuscule had not wasted the early hours of the evening in L'Enfer, and he knew now that the rear entrances of Heaven and Hell gave upon a common court, full of barrels, and empty bottles, and discarded properties, and even as the panic he had created was at its height, he had made the circuit, and was bustling into his original disguise.

The doorkeeper of L'Enfer, on the outlook for clients, had stared in stupefaction as Maxime, in his demon's garb, darted past him and plunged into the entrance of Le Ciel, and when, a moment later, his ears were startled by the

pandemonium inside the rival cabaret, he had first, with commendable presence of mind, shouted "Au feu! A l'assassin! Au secours!" to his fellows in L'Enfer, and then repeated the cry at the top of his lungs on the curb of the boulevard. So it was that the clients and personnel of Heaven and Hell reached the sidewalk almost simultaneously. Gustave, halberd in hand, came full upon a demon barring his path, and, mistaking him for the original intruder, fell upon him furiously. Other demons came to their companion's aid, other angels to Gustave's, and immediately fourscore individuals were battling desperately, without knowing or caring why. Agents appeared as if by magic, screaming for reinforcement, and pulling fainting women out of the *mêlée* by their heads and heels. Spectators ran up by hundreds, and formed a rampart around the fray. And, to add chaos to confusion, a detachment of sapeurs-pompier presently drove up in a red wagon, their horn hee-hawing like an impatient donkey. Last of all, a thin gentleman with preposterously large feet, black-bearded, spectacled, and wearing an excessively checked suit, came calmly out of L'Enfer, shouldered



his way to a position of vantage in the throng, and stood, smiling down upon the havoc.

Peace was restored. But a half dozen of the combatants were already in the hands of the police, and were hurried away to the poste, protesting volubly. Among these were Gustave Robine, in a pitiful state of demoralization, and the doorkeeper of L'Enfer, and the director of Le Ciel, with his huits reflets, crushed to an unrecognizable mass, clutched desperately in his hand.

Then every second person in the crowd explained to his neighbor how it all occurred, and, among others, a stalwart workingman proceeded to enlighten the spectacled gentleman at his side.

"It appears there was a madman," he said. "Bon sang! What places, these cabarets — what infected boxes, name of a dog!"

"Ah, ça!" replied the other, rolling his r's in speaking, in the fashion of the South, and leering at the back of the struggling director. "But then such an affair is in the chapter of variety, and as for me, I care less for a life without variety than does a fish for an apple!"



## Poire!

LIEUTENANT EUGENE DROUIN slid from his saddle with a little grunt, slipped his arm through the bridle-rein, and then, with his riding crop, rapped smartly on the round, tin-topped table nearest to him. At the summons, a small square door on the left of the archway snapped open, and a stumpy waiter, shaped like a domino, appeared abruptly on the sill.

“Froid!” shouted the officer.

The domino waiter made a vague gesture in the air with one fat hand, and then vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, closing the

door behind him with a slam. If he had but seen fit to observe "Cuckoo!" the whole affair — the sort of *châlet* from which he emerged, the small square door, and his own performance — would have borne a remarkable resemblance to a Swiss clock striking one.

Lieutenant Drouin detached an end of the rein from the snaffle-bar, knotted it about the back of one chair and flung himself into another.

"Poof!" he said, and lit a cigarette.

It was exactly one o'clock, and the *Pré Catalan* was deserted, save for a half dozen cats of various breeds and colors, chasing each other about under the chairs and tables, and two brilliant macaws sitting on wooden perches in an apparent state of coma, broken only by an occasional reflective "Wawk!" Once, a high cart flashed in an opening of the trees to the left, and then disappeared with a rattle of harness chains, in the direction of the *porte Dauphine*. For the rest, there was nothing to suggest that Paris might not be fifty kilometres distant. All the world was at breakfast.

Eugène stretched his legs, squinted at the toes of his narrow riding boots, and swore

tenderly at himself for having refused the invitation of the Marquise de Baucheron. Experience might have taught him that Rosa de Mirecourt would not be in the Bois that morning. It was a peculiarity of Rosa's to be in evidence on every occasion when her presence was not to be desired, and never to turn up when one was in the mood to chat or breakfast with her. Eugène had measured the Acacias bridle-path at a canter eight times since noon, scanning the driveway for a glimpse of the blue and scarlet victoria with the cream-colored mares, and all in vain. Rosa was nowhere to be seen. By this time, no doubt, some other lieutenant of chasseurs was thrashing out the latest gossip of the demi-monde over her breakfast table in the rue de Bassano, and still another was, in all probability, filling his place at Madame de Baucheron's, and eating the Friday breakfast — sole cardinale and œufs brouillés aux crevettes — for which her chef was famous. Baste ! what a world !

The domino waiter reappeared presently in the doorway, came quickly across to Eugène's table with a curious, tottering shuffle born of his swaddling apron, and served a small white mug

of cold milk as if it had been Château Latour-Blanche.

“ Beautiful weather, my lieutenant,” he ventured cheerfully, for he had done his service, and knew the meaning of the single epaulette.

But Eugène was in no mood for light conversation. For sole reply, he paid his score, and then drank the milk slowly, looking out toward the lower lake, across the wide stretch of fresh grass mottled with flecks of sunlight sifted through the foliage above. At his side Vivandière nuzzled the turf along the border of the graveled terrasse, the lithe muscles rippling in her polished neck, and her deep eye shifting now and again in its socket as she looked doubtfully, almost pleadingly, toward her master. They were well known on the Allée and the bridle-path of the avenue du Bois, these two, — the young chasseur, tall, clean-cut, and slender, with a complexion like a girl’s, and the gayety of Polichinelle himself, in full red breeches and tunic of black and light blue ; and the chestnut mare, nervous and alert, with her racing lines, and her long, leisurely gallop, superb in its suggestion of reserve speed and unflagging endurance.

The fates were kind to Lieutenant Eugène Drouin. Paris, spring, youth, an ample fortune, a commission in the *chasseurs*, good looks, a thoroughbred Arab, and a half dozen women frankly in love with him, — surely there was nothing lacking ; and yet he knew that something was lacking, though he could not have said what, as he sat sprawling in his little iron chair at the Pré Catalan that morning.

He straightened himself suddenly, as she came up the driveway from the left, and then rose with a stiff salute, for, a pace or so behind, walked Vieux César, so-called by an irreverent garrison, leading two horses, one limping badly. Eugène had seen him but once, at the review of the Quatorze Juillet, but, though he was not in uniform now, the fierce gray mustache and keen black eyes of General Tournadour were too familiar to Parisians to pass unrecognized in a throng, much less under circumstances such as these. When one has been Military Governor of Paris, and held the portfolio of war, one does not achieve *incognito* merely by donning a black civile. So Eugène saluted the general — but with his eyes on the girl.

She was not beautiful, he told himself, in that first moment of surprise and swift observation, but about her, as she barely glanced at him in passing, there was an indefinably compellant charm which arrested his attention and held it, like an unrecognized but strangely sweet perfume, suddenly met with in a familiar spot where there is no apparent reason for its presence. Without doubt, it was a very little thing. He knew enough of such matters to be aware that an unanalyzed attraction of the kind which, at first glance, makes a woman appear utterly irresistible, is apt, on closer acquaintance, to resolve itself into the merest trifle of dissimilarity from other women,—a tilt of a lip-corner, a dimple in an unlikely spot, a trick with the hands or the head, a rebellious wisp of hair. For he was very philosophical, and very wise, was Eugène, and twenty-six years of age, into the bargain. So there was nothing one could tell him about women. But, in any event, there was no time to define the particular charm in question. He felt rather than saw it, as she went by him, with the faintest possible whiff of orris, and the gleam of a patent-leather boot at the edge of her habit.

No, she was certainly not beautiful, but she was something dangerously, deliciously akin, said Lieutenant Drouin to himself; and that, in the unloveliest costume that can be worn by womankind, — a deep-green habit of extreme severity, and a squat derby, like a boy's, with an elastic strap brutally grooving her ruddy hair.

General Tournadour did not follow the girl beyond the spot where Eugène was standing, but drew up abruptly, and indicated the lamed horse with a gesture of irritation.

"A beautiful affair, my word, lieutenant!" he said. "This animal stumbled, back there, and has received some injury, — I know not what. We have walked from the Allée, in hope of finding a sapin here, and all without result."

The young officer was already feeling the animal's hocks with a practiced hand. There was a swelling just above the right fore fetlock, and as he touched it, the horse winced and kicked out sharply.

"A bad wrench, I fear, my general," said Eugène. "He should have an hour's rest, at least." Then, looking quickly at the saddle,



"It is evident that madame cannot ride him home. No doubt they will give him a stall in the farm stable. You can send a groom out for him this afternoon."

"Dieu! That is very well, monsieur," answered the former minister of war, with an air of perplexity amusingly in contrast with his fierce moustache. "But my daughter"—

Now Lieutenant Drouin, in matters where a woman was concerned, was nothing if not adroit. He sent a flying glance in the direction of the girl. She had aroused one of the comatose macaws from his lethargy, and now stood watching him as he munched the biscuit she had taken from a neighboring table. And again Eugène was conscious of an inexplicable but very decided little thrill.

"If Mademoiselle Tournadour — if you, my general, will consider me at your service, I shall be glad to have you make use of my mare Vivandière, here. She is as gentle as a lamb — but, perhaps, not unworthy of being seen in company with your own horse."

The General's eyes twinkled at the boyishness of the remark. He knew a horse as well as another, Vieux César, and to describe the

superb Arab before him as being, perhaps, not unworthy of being seen in company with his own sturdy charger was a bit of satire much to his relish.

"Merci!" he answered. "It is the proposal of an officer and a gentleman. But my daughter must decide if it is possible for us to accept it. In the matter of names, monsieur, you have me at an advantage."

"Pardon!" said the other. "I should have realized that. I am Eugène Drouin, lieutenant of the 29th Chasseurs."

"Natalie!" cried the General, beckoning with his crop.

As Mademoiselle Tournadour came forward, the young chasseur again made a confidant of himself, this time for the satisfaction of observing that he was an imbecile, and that a man who could not tell at the first glance whether or not a woman was entirely beautiful, deserved not to have an opportunity of discovering the fact at all. Their eyes met fairly, his glowing with delighted surprise, hers touched with that expression of negative inquiry and polite interest which immediately precedes an introduction.

"My daughter," said the General, prodding the air with his crop in her direction. "Lieutenant Drouin, of the 29th Chasseurs," he added, prodding again, in the direction of Eugène. "Monsieur le lieutenant has been so kind as to offer thee the use of his own horse, and suggests that we leave Le Cid here to be cared for until I can send Victor for him. I tell him thou art the one to decide."

"Monsieur, you are truly kind," said the girl easily — *too* easily, thought Eugène! — "but it would be to presume upon your generosity."

"But it is nothing," protested the officer. "Voyons! It is but a step to La Muette, and there I have the Ceinture!"

"You are stationed at the quartier de cavalerie?" asked Tournadour.

"Rue Desaix, yes, mon général," answered Eugène. Then, turning again to the girl, "Surely you must consent, mademoiselle. It is the simplest way. And this afternoon, if you will permit me" —

"Yes," put in the General, "and this afternoon Victor can leave your horse at the caserne as he is coming to take Le Cid.

"Eh, dis-donc, Natalie," he added, fretfully,

observing that the girl still hesitated. "Don't make difficulties, my dear. There is breakfast — yes, breakfast to be considered, and it is one, and past. Since the lieutenant is so kind" —

"Since the lieutenant is so kind," said his daughter with a smile, "eh bien, I accept."

It was the work of a moment for Eugène to shift the side-saddle from *Le Cid* to *Vivandière*. The general had already mounted, and was gazing off toward the *porte Dauphine*, with his nose in the air, as if he scented breakfast from afar.

"She is very beautiful, monsieur, your *Vivandière*, and you are very good," said *Mademoiselle Tournadour*, as the *chasseur* tightened the girth, after her boot had touched his hand, and she was in the saddle.

"She is very fortunate, mademoiselle," answered Eugène, curiously embarrassed for one so skilled in compliment. "If she wins, I shall feel that she owes the race to this good omen."

"The race?" said the girl.

"The Officers' Steeple Chase at Auteuil, on Sunday."

"You ride her yourself?"

There was a strange little note of more than casual interest in the question, and Eugène looked up suddenly. For the second time their eyes met.

"Yes," he answered. "Why?"

"Why? But nothing, monsieur, except, perhaps, to wish you *bonne chance*."

She touched Vivandière with her heel.

"Adieu, monsieur," she added, "and a thousand thanks!"

Eugène bowed.

"For nothing," he said, "and *au revoir*, mademoiselle!"

Then he watched them out of sight, with his arm through Le Cid's bridle-rein, and his trim English saddle sprawling at his feet.

There was something delightfully ingenuous, to Eugène's way of thinking, in Vieux César's method of unloading the burden of his embarrassment on the shoulders of the first young lieutenant who crossed his path, and then riding off serenely to breakfast, leaving the other, as it were, to gather up and disentangle the loose ends of the situation. He was half amused, half annoyed that his offer of Vivandière had not been taken less as a matter of

course; but, in view of the circumstances, he attended with fairly good grace to the details of stabling Le Cid, and arranging to send for his saddle, and then struck out at a swinging gait for the footpath to La Muette. For all of which there was a sufficient reason in the person of Mademoiselle Tournadour.

Now, as he revolved the meeting in his mind, he found that it was not in the least degree a surprise. Somehow, he had always expected that this girl would step suddenly into his life, with her ruddy hair and her gray eyes. It seemed to him to be something which the natural evolution of that life demanded. He had sounded every note in the gamut of emotions appropriate to a man in his position. He had had his serious, almost ascetic moods, his despondencies, his flights of folly, his impulses of stern ambition, his hours of morbid brooding and of reckless gayety. He could no longer number his love-affairs with any approach to accuracy. They were hopelessly jumbled in his memory, by very reason of their number and their triviality. Here and there, a face stood out from its fellows — the Baronne de Banis, Lady Mary Kaswellyn, Rosa de

Mirecourt, or the Marquise de Baucheron — but none of these impelled him to regret. There were no entanglements, no uncomfortable circumstances to recall. Not a stone lay in the way of the gate of the future, as, in his imagination, it swung open before him. As we have said, the fates were kind to Lieutenant Eugène Drouin. The current of experience had borne his individual shallop over deeps and shallows safely and with a song, and, now that a sudden turn of the stream had shown him Natalie Tournadour waiting on the bank, it seemed to him to be the most natural thing imaginable, — something which intuition had taught him was inevitable, and, what was better, which experience told him was desirable. The event had found him ready and willing to make room for her beside him in the boat, and, so, continue the journey in her company, well content. He bowed to fate politely, with a graceful *merci* !

For forty-eight hours he watched, almost as if he had been a disinterested outsider, this pleasant fancy moulding the details of his future life. He reckoned his *rentes* anew, assigning a due proportion to a little *hôtel* in the

Monceau quarter, to a villa at Houlgate, to horses, household expenses, his wife's allowance, servants, entertainment, a month at Aix, another at Nice, a third at Hombourg. He saw himself retired, and in the *Chambre*. And over all hovered, like a luminous presiding angel, the presence of Mademoiselle Tournadour — Madame Drouin !

So Sunday came, and, with it, breakfast at Armenonville with two fellow officers, and the growing exhilaration of the approaching race. Eugène was in his gayest mood — for was not Vivandière not only the winner of last year's Steeple Chase, but to-day in better form than she had ever been? But he allowed his good spirits to be touched, now and again, with a gentle, pleasurable melancholy, as the violins of the *tziganes* glided into the long, languorous swell of the *Valse Bleue*, and his handsome eyes clouded thoughtfully, and his fine mouth drooped, so that Gaston Cavaignac rallied him joyously upon the new affair, which alone could account for such tristesse. It lent an added zest, this. Eugène smiled, and was glad that in his denial of the charge rang so little of conviction.



The first race had been already run, as the three officers slipped through the main entrance of Auteuil, and made their way across the pesage, and past the betting booths, to the grass oval around which the horses, in charge of stable lads, were slowly circling. It was one of May's clearest and most brilliant afternoons. The gravel pathways and stretches of vivid turf were thronged with the best known men and women of the two great Parisian worlds of sport and fashion, and the air rang with gay gossip and spirited discussion. But Eugène had ears for none of this, and eyes but for two things, — Vivandière, blanketed, and swinging around the oval with her long, sure stride, and Natalie Tournadour, in a delicious gown of soft blue, standing at the side of Vieux César. Life, at that moment, was good to live. The chasseur drew a quick breath of pleased surprise. She was there, then, to see him win. He might have known !

A mixture of sudden, unfamiliar embarrassment and boyish vanity caused him to avoid her eye as he made a turn of the oval, consulting with his stable lad about the mare's condition ; but he held himself very straight, and

was pleasantly conscious that his tunic was new, and his boots a veritable triumph of Coquillot's. When he went back to his companions his eyes were glowing.

"Content?" asked Cavaignac.

"Je te crois, mon vieux!" he answered. "One never can say, but it is certain that no one has a better chance. She is perfection!"

"There is the white," put in Lieutenant Mors, dubiously.

Eugène vouchsafed the rival racer a brief, contemptuous glance. It was a lean, powerfully built brute, with an astonishing reach to even the leisurely stride with which he paced the oval. A trainer would have had something to say of those lithe shoulders, and that long barrel, dwindling along the flanks, and that easy swing of haunch and swathed hock. But Eugène was not a trainer.

"A fine animal," he observed, carelessly, "but there is no comparison. One has only to look at Vivandière."

"Tiens!" cried Gaston, "the saddling-bell! I am off to put five louis on you gagnant, and five placé. Bonne chance, vieux!"

In truth, the saddling-bell was jangling from

the little pavilion to the left, and the officers hurrying forward to weigh in. As he passed into the enclosure, Eugène glanced over his shoulder. General Tournadour and his daughter were still standing at the oval-side, and he had a glimpse of Natalie clapping her hands and pointing, as the stable lad slipped the blanket off Vivandière. But he made no sign, even when, three minutes later, he mounted, within five metres of where they stood. Time enough, when the victory was won, to claim his reward in the gray eyes of which he had been dreaming. His heart leaped, nevertheless, as he gave Vivandière the rein. It was the voice of Vieux César, almost at his side : —

“ Be not afraid, *ma petite*. There is no doubt that he is going to win.”

No doubt, indeed, with her eyes upon him, and her heart praying for his success !

Once upon the course, he swept the vast enclosure with a glance, and his blood danced with the excitement of the moment, and the brilliancy of the scene. To the right the great tribunes of the *pesage*, and the chair-dotted turf in front, glowed with a shifting rainbow of spring gowns and vivid parasols, and sparkled

with a myriad white waistcoats, drifting, like large, lazy snowflakes, to and fro ; to the left lay the vast enclosure of the pelouse, flooded with dazzling sunlight, its thousands circling here and there like ants. Beyond, the race-course swept away, smooth and green, to the long rows of trees in their new foliage, banked along the route de Boulogne and the allée des Fortifications. It was a day of days, whether one stood inside the rail, straining for a glimpse of the horses, or swept slowly to the left, on the course itself, toward the starting point, with a thoroughbred's flanks quivering between one's knees !

As the horses circled about the start, getting into position, Eugène's keen, handsome eyes were busy with trivial details, dwindled by distance to mere specks, — two men, leaning far over the rails, signaling bets to each other across the track, a gleam of orange from the finish flag, the starter rocking toward him on a ridiculously fat pony. Then, in an instant, every faculty came taut like a stretched string, and they were off, in a thunder of hoofs and a whirl of flying sod. He saw a red flag fluttering stiffly in the breeze as he swept past, and

heard, in the distance, the whirr of the signal gong from the judge's stand. It was a fair start. He touched Vivandière lightly with his hand, and, at the signal, felt her lengthen under him into her long, magnificent gallop. The tribunes and the crowded pelouse rushed down upon him with a murmur of many voices. The long double line of faces at the rail slid past like white dots, and the dark green hedge of the water-jump sprang out of the track at his feet. Houp, ma belle! A whish of brushed twigs, a gleam of silver water passing under, a thud of hoofs on the soft turf beyond, and they were over, and away into the southern loop to the left!

As he swung to the north again, he saw the ants of the pelouse scurrying across to the rail along the transverse cut. Let them run, les drôles! They had need to if they would see the passing of Vivandière! Past the high hurdle — so much the better that one did not have to take it! — and down the transverse to the second water-jump. It was easy, that. The mare crossed it like a bird, and Eugène saw the tribunes again from the corner of his eye, and laughed at the shrill "Bravo!" of a little

grisette in a red hat, who flew past him, leaning on the rail.

Vivandière was well into the left reach of the northern loop before Eugène fairly realized what that smooth, empty width of turf before him meant. He was leading, — had been leading from the very start! And somewhere, back there in the gay throng of the pesage, two gray eyes were watching him, straining to catch each movement of the blue tunic, each bound of the gallant mare. He threw back his head and laughed at the clear, wide sky. It was very good to be alive!

So, with a broad sweep to the right, into the home stretch, the last curve of the giant "8" he had described. It lay ahead, full and fair, cut by one low hedge. And then —

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The sound battered its way into the chasseur's understanding, and hurt as if it had been, in verity, that of blow on blow. He leaned forward, spurring the mare to her utmost endeavor. And she responded, but still the beat of following hoofs grew louder. For Vivandière was thoroughbred, and she had kept her maddest pace from the start. It was reserved

for racers of ignobler spirit to hold their greatest effort for the end.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Once more pesage and pelouse rushed down upon him, not now with a murmur of voices, but with a mighty roar, that swelled, deafening, into his ears.

“Flambeau! Flambeau! C’est Flambeau qui gagne!”

There was a gasp of short-coming breath at his elbow, a gleam of white, tense neck, a flash of red breeches and of polished boots, and the Steeple Chase Militaire was run, with Vivandière second, and the lean, white Flambeau winner by a length.

The officers rode back slowly, past the applauding tribunes. Eugène saw dimly that it was a colonel of infantry who rode Flambeau, a metre ahead of him, but his thoughts were more for Natalie than for himself or his successful competitor. Poor little girl! She had been so anxious for his victory, and no doubt so confident, after the brave words of Vieux César. But, after all, — second! It was not so bad in a field of twelve. But he had been wrong not to speak to her before he mounted.

Well, he would atone for that, never fear! Moreover, when once they were married, he would give her Vivandière — the cause of their first meeting — the reason of their present sympathy! It was a good thought.

Eugène did not find the general and his daughter readily in the vast throng in the passage. Three times he made the circuit of the tribunes, scanning the tiers of seats, and threading his way through the little wooden chairs upon the turf in front. Once he passed Cavaignac and Mors, walking arm in arm, who swore at him picturesquely for his defeat. Vivandière had paid but seventeen francs fifty placé, and so they had only seventy-five to show for the five louis they had placed upon her gagnant. The privilege of calling her master tête de laitue was but trifling recompense, and they strolled on, surprised that one noted for his eloquence in this variety of obloquy did not deign to reply.

Finally, at the doors of the little refreshment pavilion, and talking with a colonel of infantry, he found the objects of his quest, and went up eagerly, saluting. Vieux César greeted him with heartiness.



“Ah, lieutenant! Our preserver of Friday — quoi? Natalie, see who is here — our preserver of Friday!”

The girl was radiant. Her cheeks were flushed, and the gray eyes shone with a brightness that set Eugène's heart pounding so hard that he felt its throbbing must be dimpling the breast of his tunic.

“What a magnificent race!” she said, giving him her hand. “You have cause to be proud of Vivandière. It is something to have ridden such a horse.”

“It is always something to ride a good horse,” said Eugène, looking into her eyes, “and it is something, also, to be second in a good race, but it is more to be first. And I had my reasons for wishing to be that, mademoiselle.”

Natalie smiled.

“Ah, sans doute!” she answered. “But you must not call me mademoiselle, monsieur. You must know that since yesterday I am a serious married woman. And what is more, my husband rode Flambeau! Am I not a veritable mascotte?”

She laid her hand on the arm of the officer at her side.

“My husband, Colonel Montrésor,” she added. “Paul, this is the officer of whom I spoke to you — who was so kind — Lieutenant” —

She turned to Eugène, blushing divinely, with an embarrassed little laugh.

“Oh, pray forgive me!” she said. “I am *so* stupid — but — but — I have forgotten your name!”



# Papa Labesse

UP on the Butte Montmartre life is a matter of first principles, and conventionality an undiscovered affliction. A spade is a spade, and the blacker it happens to be, the more apt it is to receive its proper appellation, and the less likely to be confused with the hearts and diamonds. That is why Papa Labesse had no hesitation in referring to Bombiste Fremier as a good-for-nothing, — a vaurien.

Just off the boulevard de Rochechouart, in the rue Veron, Papa Labesse kept a tiny join-

er's shop, in which, in his velvet cap with a long tassel and his ample apron of blue denim, he might be seen daily, toiling upon various small orders for the quartier. But daily, also, when the light began to fail, he would discard his apron, and, locking his shop door, walk slowly up the long curving incline of the rue Lepic, and through the appropriately rural-looking rue St. Rustique, until he emerged upon the broad summit of the Butte. Here he would light his pipe, and, with his legs spread wide, stand motionless by the low wattled fence at the brink of the bluff, looking off across the city. In appearance Papa Labesse was not the type of man in whom one would be apt to look for sentimentality. He was short and very thin, with a hooked nose and a gray moustache turned up fiercely at the ends, and his skin was brown and deeply wrinkled, as if he had somehow shrunk or warped ; but then, as Marcelle said of him, it is the rough and crinkled Brazil-nut that is as full as possible of sweet white meat.

Between these two there had always existed a firm bond of camaraderie. Marcelle was the daughter of Madame Clapot, who presided

over a little dairy directly opposite the joiner's shop, and on the day when she first made the astounding discovery that small girls can stand upright and walk alone, as if by instinct she had made a bee-line for the doorway of Papa Labesse, and, staggering in, triumphant, had fallen headlong, with a gurgle of satisfaction, into a great pile of shavings. Thenceforward she came often and tarried long, and Papa Labesse built houses for her out of odds and ends of wood, and fashioned miniature articles of furniture in his spare moments, and had always a bit of sucre-candi or a little gingerbread figure tucked away in a certain drawer of his table, which she soon learned to find for herself.

It seemed to Papa Labesse but the week following her first plunge among his shavings when Marcelle came in, all in white, and with a veil like a little bride's, to parade her splendor under his delighted eyes, before going to her first communion. But when he put into her hand the small white prayerbook he had bought for this great occasion, she had forgotten all else, and thrown her arms about his neck, entirely regardless of her finery.

“After maman, thou knowest, Papa Labesse, I love thee best of all the world !”

And Papa Labesse was properly shocked at this recklessness and said, *bon Dieu !* that was a fine veil, then, made to be crushed against an odious apron covered with chips and sawdust — what? And, as Marcelle ran off to join Madame Clapot, who was waiting, consumed with mingled pride and impatience, across the way, the old man wiped his spectacles vigorously, shook his head several times, and then, suddenly abandoning his work, three hours before the accustomed time, betook himself to the Butte, and smoked three pipefuls of tobacco, looking off across the city.

It was at this time that two radical changes came into the life of Papa Labesse. First, on the very summit of the Butte they began to lay the foundations for the great church of *Sacré-Cœur* ; and, second, Marcelle took it into her pretty little head to accompany him on his daily climb. At first he was disturbed by both these innovations. This curious afternoon communion of his with the wonderful wide city, which lay spread out before him like a great gray map, was akin to a religion. He loved Paris

with a love so great that perhaps he himself was barely able to comprehend its proportions. He was never tired of standing there and watching her breathing at his feet, of picking out, in the gathering twilight, the faint white speck to the west that was the arc de l'Etoile, the domes of the Invalides and the Panthéon, Notre Dame, to the eastward, and the towers and spires of half a hundred minor temples and public buildings. He passed from one to the other in a kind of visual pilgrimage, saying the names over slowly to himself, and occasionally affecting an air of surprise, as if some one of the familiar piles had suddenly and unaccountably appeared in a new locality.

“La Trinité; Notre Dame de Lorette; La Bourse. Tiens! *St. Eustache!*”

At the outset, the serenity of this contemplative hour was seriously impaired by the creaking of derrick-pulleys and the loud chatter of wagon-drivers, and hardly less so by the eager questions of Marcelle, clinging to his hand, her eyes bright with excitement, as she looked out with him across Paris, or peered down into the vast pit when the masons were laying the foundations of the big church. But, bit by bit,

Papa Labesse became accustomed to the new conditions ; and every night, an hour before sunset, his high, dry voice summoned Marcelle from the dairy across the way, and the two set forth together up the long curving incline of the rue Lepic, and the old man would smoke his pipe by the low wattled fence at the brink of the bluff, while the child babbled of her little affairs. Papa Labesse no longer named the domes and spires now. His eyes rested alternately on the city and on the girl beside him, and often, when Marcelle was silent, looking off to where the thin, silver line of the Seine gleamed briefly between distant buildings, he shook his head several times, tapping the side of his inverted pipe-bowl against the palm of his hand, long after the ashes had fallen out.

When Marcelle was seventeen, Madame Clapot died suddenly, and the girl moved from the rue Veron to the home of her aunt, near by, in the rue Seveste. But the change made no difference in her friendship for Papa Labesse. All through the ensuing spring she called regularly for him each afternoon, and they climbed the Butte in company, as before. The old man would have been completely happy had it not been for Bombiste Fremier.



Bombiste was an employé of the state, — an humble one, to be sure, but, nevertheless, part and parcel of the great Administration which includes every one, from the President of the Republic to the street-sweeper on the rue Royale. In Fremier's case the employment was brief and not over-lucrative. He was engaged, for two months only in the twelve, to mow the grass on the fortifications and in parts of the Bois and the smaller parks of Paris. For the remainder of the year he lived none knew how, but he had always a few white pieces in his pocket, and was ready to treat a comrade at Le Cheval Blanc, the little wine-shop kept by Bonhomme Pirou at the corner of the boulevard and the rue Seveste. As regards the source of his income, it is probable that Amélie Chouert, called La Trompette, by reason of her loud voice, might have divulged some remarkable particulars. In any event, she was his constant companion, a sharp-featured, angular woman with snapping black eyes and a great mop of hair that came down to within an inch of her continuous line of eyebrow.

Fremier himself was as handsome as a bru-

tal picture, — a giant in stature, with square shoulders, a thick neck, in which the muscles stood out like ropes, and the face of an Italian brigand. It is a type of masculine beauty which goes far in Montmartre, and to it was added a deep, melodious voice, that, whether in the heat of political argument or the more complicated phraseology of love, carried complete conviction. No one blamed La Trompette for her infatuation. As we have said, life on the Butte is a matter of first principles, and, in view of the manifest attraction, her position was entirely conceivable. Except to Papa Labesse.

He was a singularly rigid old man, who took no account of the remarkable beauty and the irresistible tongue of Fremier, but only of the fact that he was called Bombiste because he talked against the government at Le Cheval Blanc, advocating the use of dynamite, and only the bon Dieu knew what else beside. And if, as La Trompette alleged, he swung his scythe on the fortifications like a veritable demon, what of that? No, evidently he was a vaurien !

So it was, that when, one fine May after-

---

noon, Papa Labesse, emerging from his little shop at the summons of Marcelle, caught a glimpse of Bombiste slipping around the further corner into the rue Lepic, his heart gave a sudden great bound and then seemed to stand still. He was very silent on the way to the Butte, for, moment by moment, the blackness of untoward premonition was settling upon him. He glanced, covertly, but again and again, at Marcelle, observing, with a strange, suddenly acquired power of perception, that she was already a woman. He had not seemed to notice, day by day, the change in her. Now it dawned upon him in a flash. No, it was no longer the baby who had fallen headlong among his shavings, nor yet the child going to her first communion, all in white and with a veil like a little bride's, nor even the slender girl who had peered down with him into the vast pit where the masons were laying the foundations of the big church. It was a woman who walked beside him, a woman very beautiful, with dark hair, coiled above a pale, pure face, and great eyes, like crushed violets swimming in their dew. Papa Labesse caught his breath : Bombiste Fremier !

But Marcelle saw nothing of her companion's preoccupation. She almost danced beside him up the long curving incline of the rue Lepic, chaffing, as she passed, the children playing in the gutters, and pausing continually to sniff at some flower-vender's fragrant wares, or peer into the window of a tiny shop. She was glowing with health and happiness: her cheeks dappled with color, her eyes shining. When, finally, they emerged upon the Butte, she ran to the little wattled fence, and with her hands clasped behind her head, looked out across the city. Even when Papa Labesse had come up to her side, she said no word for several minutes.

They had started later than was usual, and already the daylight had begun to dim, and the west to turn from red to saffron, and from saffron to fawn. Directly below them lay a maze of steep and narrow streets, shelving toward the boulevard de Rochechouart; and far further, to the southwest, the place de l'Opéra was breaking into the alternate deep red and glaring white of electric advertising signs, the lettering of which could not be distinguished from where they stood, but which painted the faint

haze of evening with swiftly changing contrasts of color.

Suddenly Marcelle began to speak, her voice eloquent with a strange, new music.

"Papa Labesse, dost thou comprehend what all this says to us, this wonderful city upon which we look each night, thou and I? From here — what? A bewilderment of lights, a sea of roofs, a murmur of faintly heard cries. But what does it mean? Surely, it is the voice of the mother of us all, of Paris, the great, the beautiful — of a woman, Papa Labesse: that finally, which thou canst never comprehend, pauvre Papa Labesse! — a woman who says but one word — love! Papa Labesse — L'amour, l'amour, l'amour! — again, and again, and again, l'amour!"

There was a long silence. Then, almost timidly, Papa Labesse laid his hand on hers.

"But thou dost not love, my little one, — thou?" he said.

Marcelle turned suddenly.

"Si, I love!" she answered.

Above the tapering, distant shaft of the Tour Eiffel a tiny cloud caught the last ray of the departed sun, blazed crimson for an in-

stant, and then, as suddenly, gloomed to slate-gray.

“Que Dieu te bénisse !” said Papa Labesse, solemnly.

“It is all so wonderful,” continued Marcelle after a moment, “and yet I have never seemed to understand it till to-day, — this great, sweet voice of Paris. It is indeed as if she was the mother of us all, Papa Labesse, and was spreading out her arms, and calling us all to come to her heart. And for each of us she has something good — something better than ever we have imagined for ourselves, or wished to have ; and yet, in whatever form, it is really the same thing always — l’amour, Papa Labesse, l’amour !”

Out of the strain of the past half hour a great sob was suddenly wrung from Papa Labesse. He took the girl’s radiant face between his knotted hands and looked long into her eyes without speaking.

“Tell me, my pigeon,” he said, finally, “is it — is it the young Fremier ?”

Marcelle flung both arms about his neck, as she had done on the day when he had given her the little white prayerbook. He felt her lips,

warm and moist, against his wrinkled ear, and when she spoke, her voice was like the sound of two leaves grazing each other at the touch of a light breeze.

“Oui !” she said.

When Marcelle went away with Bombiste Fremier, all the quartier babbled. Fat fishwives and dairywomen stopped at each others' doors, and said, wisely, with their heads together and hands on hips, that they had always known how it would be. Since the first, whatever Bombiste wanted, that Bombiste was sure to have — what? Did not Madame Rollin remember how, when a mere baby, he had cried for the little brass dish which hung in front of his father's *salle de coiffure*, until, actually, Fremier père had taken it down and given it to him to cut his first tooth on? Assuredly, Madame Rollin recalled this astounding incident, and not only that, but the fact that she herself had spoken to Madame Fremier, warning her that the result of such folly would be the unhappiness of some one. But they were all alike, the Fremier. They made no excuses and took no advice.

There were others who recalled the days

when La Trompette was the belle of the quartier, and as respectable as the best of them. But there, what wouldst thou? Bombiste had wanted her, so there was nothing to be done. And the debate invariably ended with a bit of flattery for Bombiste. It was a beau garçon, after all, name of a good name, with such eyes! And a tongue, bon Dieu, to draw the cork from a bottle! For there are many mysteries of human society, but the greatest of these is the good word of the other women for the man.

Curiously enough, Bombiste's most eloquent partisan was La Trompette herself. Her first appearance at Le Cheval Blanc, after Fremier's desertion of her, was the signal for the outburst of ironic condolence.

"Eh! La Trompette, he has planted thee — yes? So the cord is cut, little one — hein? Did he give thee a reference, at least?"

To these, and many similar compliments, La Trompette returned nothing beyond a tolerant smile, or —

"One shall see, my children!" she cried, in her shrill voice. "It is not the first time, you know. Variety, one has need of that in life. Perhaps we do not know each other, that



---

story and I! Wait a little. In six weeks we shall be here in company as before, and the little one it will be who is planted. But I remain. And she who laughs last — what? But, above all, not a word against Bombiste, unless you have need of the wherewithal to make broken heads. It is a brave gars, do you understand, and one who has often enough paid your drinks, types of good-for-nothings!"

And she planted herself at a table amidst a burst of laughter and applause (for loyalty is greatly esteemed on the boulevard Rochechouart), and proceeded to collect interest, in the form of repeated glasses of cognac, on the past generosity of Bombiste Fremier.

But the eternal feminine had its part in the make-up of La Trompette, and so it was that one evening, just at nightfall, she presented herself at the door of Papa Labesse's little shop. He was always at home now, poor Papa Labesse, for the growing church of Sacré-Cœur had never once seen him emerging, breathless but smiling, from the little rue St. Rustique, since the day when Marcelle disappeared. He stopped his simple toil at the same hour still, but, instead of stepping out briskly upon the

long, curving incline of the rue Lepic, he would seat himself in his doorway, and, oftentimes forgetting to light the pipe which he had filled, stare out wistfully across the street, to where a trim little laundress stood, busily ironing shirts, in the window of the shop that had formerly been the dairy of Madame Clapot.

He looked up as La Trompette drew up before his door, and a slight frown wrinkled for an instant above his patient blue eyes, from which all the singular intensity seemed gone.

"Thou hast a strange air of solitude, Papa Labesse," began La Trompette, affecting a tone of solicitude.

Papa Labesse made no reply.

"And Marcelle," said the woman, — "she is always with Bombiste? Poor little one! The end is so sure! Is there one who knows him better than I? Ah, non! It is always the same story, — a pair of bright eyes, a good figure, and v'là! But, without fail, he comes back to me, ce sacré coureur!"

She glanced up and down the street with an air of complete unconcern, and then her eyes came back to Papa Labesse with a vindictive snap.

“Happily,” she added, “he will have taught her a way of earning white pieces in abundance. She is not the first, thy Marcelle. They are sprinkled from here to La Villette, the gonzesses who know the name of Bombiste Fremier. Wouldst thou prove it? Walk, then, from the place Pigalle to the place de la Rotonde to-night at twelve !” And La Trompette laughed.

Papa Labesse rose suddenly to his full height.

“God damn you !” he said. And this was no oath, but rather a prayer.

Toward the end of July Papa Labesse resumed his pilgrimages to the summit of the Butte. He had aged visibly in six weeks, and he walked no longer with the brisk and cheerful step which had bespoken his youthfulness of spirit, but shuffled his feet, and often stumbled over trifling obstacles. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, and if he heard the greetings of those along his way, for whom formerly he had always had a hearty word, he made no reply. It is doubtful whether, had he been suddenly asked, he could have told his exact whereabouts: it was rather instinct than

absolute intention which sent him shuffling up to his old coign of vantage. His eyes took no note of his immediate surroundings, but looked far beyond, with an expression that was half question, half entreaty. It was only when he had come to the edge of the bluff that he seemed to awaken into something resembling the man he had been. Then, his lean, gnarled hands gripped the wattles with a kind of convulsive eagerness, and, for a little, the old blue spark gleamed under his lids, and his eyes swept the great city feverishly, as if they would pluck out her secret from her by mere force of will. He no longer dwelt upon the churches and the public buildings, but traced with his glance the line of the great boulevards, des Batignolles, de Clichy, and de Rochechouart, and their tributary streets; and often he remained at his post until nearly midnight, motionless, silent, watching, watching, watching, with his eyes fixed upon the distant red glare from the giant revolving wings of the brilliantly lighted Moulin Rouge.

What he saw, what he heard, during those long hours of vigil no one ever knew: what he thought he barely knew himself. The en-

tire intensity of his failing strength was concentrated upon one endeavor. Hour after hour he sent a voice without sound out, over, and down into the labyrinth of streets beneath him, into the dance-halls, the wine-shops, the café-concerts, wooing, pleading, beseeching. It was as if, minute by minute, he wove a great net of tenderest entreaty and persuasion, fitting it cunningly into each nook and cranny of the city below, and then, at the end, with one mighty effort of his will, drew the whole fabric up and into his heart, hoping against hope that, mysteriously, some one pleading thought of his might have caught her and swept her back to his arms. It was a struggle, silent but to the death, between Papa Labesse and the great siren city, for the possession of a soul.

And, as if, indeed, that eager voice without words of his entreaty had, somehow, been able to reach and win her, Marcelle came back. It was at the hour just following sunset, the hour they had loved to pass together, and superbly still and clear. To the west, over the wide, green sweep of the Bois de Boulogne, a great multitude of little puffs of cloud lay piled up against a turquoise sky, and these were con-

stantly changing from tint to opalescent tint, as shafts of crimson and saffron sunlight moved among them from below the horizon. Above, where the turquoise dulled to steel, the stars were already nicking the sky, one by one; and, one by one, the lights of the boulevard, red, white, and yellow, flashed into being in reply.

As it was the dinner hour, the summit of the Butte was deserted save for the figure of Papa Labesse, silhouetted against the sky, as Marcelle emerged from the rue St. Rustique, came slowly across the open space before the church, and stood at his side. She was very pale, with the transparent, leaden pallor which comes only at the end, and her face seemed little more than two great, stunned eyes. Her clothes, in the last stage of what had been tawdry finery, were unspeakably more slovenly than mere rags. It was but eight weeks since they had stood on the same spot together, but this so brief period had wrought in each the havoc of a decade.

For a time neither spoke. Papa Labesse had looked up briefly as she reached his side, and then, as she swayed and seemed about to fall, had put an arm about her and drawn her

close to him. So they stood watching, while Paris winked and sparkled into the starry splendor of her summer night. Finally, —

“I knew thou wouldst come, my pigeon,” said Papa Labesse. “For a time I was desolate, is it not so? — and sat alone in the shop below there, and thought of nothing. But then I remembered how that thou didst love this place, and so I have come each night to wait for thee, because I knew thou wouldst return. And now thou art here. It is well, my little white pigeon, it is very well.”

A keener ear than his would have caught the unmistakable warning that underlay her voice when she replied. It lacked not only hope, but life itself. It was the voice of one long dead.

“I did not think to find thee here, Papa Labesse — it has been so long since then. I came to see it all once again — to hear the voice of the great city that sings of love. And then, when at last comes the night, I would throw myself down from here, even into the very heart of her, for I am hers, and she has made me like herself.”

She seemed to feel the unvoiced question

which quivered on the lips of Papa Labesse, and continued, presently, —

“He never married me. Not that I cared for that. I loved him, thou seest, and when one loves one thinks not of little things. No, I was happy so. But now — last week he left me. He has gone back to La Trompette. He gave me a hundred sous. I think he was sorry to go.”

A faint smile touched the corners of her lips.

“Pauvre Bombiste !” she added. “It is one who does not know his own heart !”

And this again is unknowable mystery, — the gentle word of *the* woman for the man !

“He is mowing on the fortifs this week,” went on Marcelle, wistfully echoing her lover’s slang, “and La Trompette is with him. I saw them but to-day, from the porte de Clichy. So, since they are together, for me it is finished. I have come back to the Butte, Papa Labesse — come back to die. For now there is none to receive me, save Paris. She will take me, thou knowest, she who has made me like herself.”

That was all. There was no word, now at the end, of Bombiste Fremier, except that he



did not know his own heart, — no word of the days without food, the long nights of following him from wineshop to wineshop, perhaps to be refused at last the wretched shelter of his little room ; no word of curses, blows, and insults worse than either.

When she was silent again Papa Labesse drew her gently away from the brink of the bluff.

“My pigeon,” he said, “there is one to receive thee. Thou wilt come to the little shop — pas ? — and rest there upon my bed. For I have no need of sleep, I. And in the morning thou wilt be strong again, and well. Come, my pigeon !”

And silently, hand in hand, they retraced the familiar way, down the long, curving incline of the rue Lepic, and the door of the little joiner’s shop closed behind them.

Marcelle died at daybreak, going out softly like a lamp that dims and dims, and then flares once into brilliance before all is dark. Papa Labesse was on his knees beside the narrow bed, when she woke from the stupor into which she had fallen, and raised herself upright, her face shining with a great light. The old man,

himself unconscious that the end had come, lifted his eyes eagerly to hers.

"My little white pigeon," he said tremulously, "thou findest thyself better, is it not so?"

But the knowledge of him had passed utterly from Marcelle. For a moment she was silent, looking at the wall of the tiny room, as she had looked in the old days at the great city, spread like a map at the foot of the Butte Montmartre. Then she sank back upon the pillow and crossed her hands upon her breast.

"Paris!" she said. "Paris, toi qui chantes de l'amour!"

And then, very faintly, "Bombi!"

It was her pet name for Fremier, but Papa Labesse did not understand.

Half an hour later, he came out into the growing light of the dawn, and looked vacantly up and down the short stretch of the rue Veron as if uncertain what direction he desired to take. It was not yet five o'clock, but already the quartier was astir. As Papa Labesse hesitated in the doorway, a band of laborers passed the corner, laughing, on their way to their work in the Rochechouart section of the Métropoli-

tain. The little assistant was taking down the shutters of the laundry across the way, and on every side was the sound of opening doors and windows, and voices suddenly raised in greeting or comment upon the weather. Madame Rollin lumbered by, carrying a bundle of clothes on her way to the public lavoir.

"Hé! bonjour, Papa Labesse!" she cried in passing. "A fine morning — what?"

Papa Labesse turned suddenly, clamped the padlock on his door, and was presently shuffling along the avenue de Clichy. As he went, the city awoke around him to full activity, but he noted his surroundings even less than he had been wont to do of late, on his climbs to the Butte. The return of Marcelle had quickened him, but for a moment only. Now he was again, as it were, a mere automaton, going forward without volition, or purpose, or perception, on, on, on, whither and why he knew not.

After a time he was conscious of a great weariness. The noisy clamor of the crowds on the avenue, marketing and bargaining in the new sunlight, seemed unaccountably to have given place to quiet; and looking about him, Papa Labesse learned from a little signboard

that he was passing through the porte de Clichy. The octroi officials looked curiously at the shuffling, stooping figure as he went by, and one of them laughed.

"As full as an egg, the grandfather!" he said.

Turning to the left, Papa Labesse toiled up upon the slope of the fortifications, stumbled on for a little, and, finally, as his exhaustion gained upon him, flung himself, face down, upon the grass. He had passed the need of sleep long since, but he lay quite motionless for a long time, with his chin on his hands. Directly before him, seen more clearly from the elevation upon which he lay, was the dingy suburb of Clichy, and, to the left, its still dingier neighbor, Levallois-Perret, studded, both of them, with gaunt sheds of blackened wood, and ghastly factories and storehouses of cheap brick, their endless windows, in close-set rows, giving them the appearance of rusted waffle-irons, and their tall chimneys slabbering slow coils of smoke. In the immediate foreground, a man with a scythe was lazily cutting the long grass on the outward slope of the fortifications.

Presently Papa Labesse began to talk to himself. His eyes were very bright, and as he spoke they jumped nimbly from shed to shed, from factory to factory, of the dispiriting scene before him.

“But what are those?” he began, scowling at two high chimneys standing side by side. “Tiens! Sainte Clotilde! But the evening is clear then, par exemple, that one sees so far and so well. It is all so wonderful—but I have never understood it till now. Ah! Saint Etienne-du-Mont! That I know, since the dome of the Panthéon is quite near. Sapristi! What is that? L’amour, Papa Labesse, l’amour,—that which, finally, thou canst never understand, poor Papa Labesse! Tiens! Notre Dame! Ah, ça! A woman like herself, what?—like Paris that sings of love! My pigeon!”

So, for an hour, the thin stream of jumbled phrases slipped from his dry lips. He talked softly,—no one could have heard him at two paces,—but the babble never ceased.

At seven o’clock a woman carrying a basket appeared upon the fortifications from the direction of the gate, and, pausing at the top of the slope, looked down upon the mower.

"Hé! Allô — labago! Bom-biste!" she cried. The man turned. There was no such thing as not being able to hear La Trompette.

And suddenly Papa Labesse held his peace.

Bombiste came up the slope with a long leisurely stride, flung his scythe upon the grass, and placing his arm around La Trompette's neck, kissed her loudly on both cheeks.

"Name of God!" he said. "But I have thirst!"

They seated themselves side by side and close together, with their backs to Papa Labesse, some fifty metres distant, and La Trompette opened her basket. Presently Bombiste lowered his left elbow and raised his right in the act of drawing a cork, and then raised his left again and took a long draught from the bottle. At the same moment Papa Labesse swung round a quarter circle to the right, as if upon a pivot, and began to crawl very slowly forward.

"Chouette!" said Bombiste to La Trompette, biting a great mouthful from a slice of rye bread and cheese, "c'est du suisse!"

"Thou deservest water and a raw turnip!" replied the woman, assuming a tone of angry

reproach. "If it were not I, thou knowest, long since thou wouldst have been put ashore, heart of an artichoke — va !"

"I am like that," observed Bombiste, with regret. "But what wouldst thou, name of God ! They come, they go : but at the end it is always thou."

The woman made no reply, and Papa Labesse, two metres away, laid his gnarled brown fingers on the handle of Bombiste's discarded scythe.

Bombiste capped his philosophy with a second long draught of wine, and then, taking a stupendous bite of bread and cheese, glanced slyly at his companion out of the corners of his eyes. She was gazing straight before her, her teeth nicking the edge of her lower lip.

"What hast thou?" mumbled the man, with his mouth full.

"She was very pretty," answered La Trompette, "and she loved thee, that garce. But thou art going to tell me that it is finished forever ! — That never, never," she went on, clenching her hands, "wilt thou see her again ! Else I plant thee, and thou canst earn thine own white pieces, — mackerel !"

Bombiste leaned over and placed his face beside hers.

“Is it not enough?” he said in his softest voice. “Voyons bien! What is she to me, this Marcelle? Fichtre! I planted her last week, thou knowest. B'en, quoi? Thou knowest the blue gown? It is that which sweeps the Boul' Roch' at present! But that is not for long. Perhaps the Morgue — more likely St. Lazare. Art thou not content?” And he pressed his cheek to the woman's and moved his head up and down slowly, caressing her.

Papa Labesse rose slowly to his feet, and stretched his lean arms to their full length. The sun winked for the fraction of a second on the downward swirling scythe, and then all was still, save for the dull thud, thudding of two round objects rolling down the uneven slope of sod. In a moment even this sound ceased.

Papa Labesse revolved slowly upon his heels, pausing as his blue eyes, wide and vacant, fell upon the distant walls of Sacré-Cœur, swimming, cream-white and high in air, between him and the sun. Then he pitched softly forward upon the grass.





## In the Absence of Monsieur

**M**ONSIEUR ARMAND MICHEL — seated before his newly installed Tintin — was in the act of saying to himself that if its acquisition could not, with entire accuracy, be viewed as an unqualified bargain, it had been, at least, an indisputable stroke of diplomacy, when his complacent meditation was interrupted by the entrance of Arsène. It was the first time that Monsieur Michel had seen his new servant in his official capacity, and he was not ill-pleased. Arsène was in flawless evening dress, in marked con-

trast to the objectionably flamboyant costume in which, on the preceding evening, he had made application for the position of valet-maître d'hôtel, left vacant by the fall from grace of Monsieur Michel's former factotum. That costume had come near to being his undoing. The fastidious Armand had regarded with an offended eye the brilliant green cravat, the unspeakable checked suit, and the painfully pointed chrome-yellow shoes in which the applicant for his approval was arrayed, and more than once, in the course of conversation, was on the point of putting a peremptory end to the negotiations by a crushing comment on would-be servants who dressed like café chantant comedians. But the reference had outweighed the costume. Monsieur Michel did not remember ever to have read more unqualified commendation. Arsène Sigard had been for two years in the service of the Comte de Chambour, whose square pink marble hôtel on the avenue de Malakoff is accounted, in this degenerate age, one of the sights of Paris ; and this of itself, was more than a little. The Comte did not keep his eyes in his pockets, by any manner of means, when it came to the

affairs of his household, and apparently there was nothing too good for him to say about Arsène. Here, on pale blue note-paper, and surmounted by the de Chambour crest, it was set forth that the bearer was sober, honest, clean, willing, capable, quiet, intelligent, and respectful. *And* discreet. When the Comte de Chambour gave his testimony on this last point it meant that you were getting the opinion of an expert. Monsieur Michel refolded the reference, tapped it three times upon the palm of his left hand, and engaged the bearer without further ado.

Now, as Arsène went quietly about the salon, drawing the curtains and clearing away the card table, which remained as mute witness to Monsieur Michel's ruling passion, he was the beau idéal of a gentleman's manservant,—unobtrusive in manner and movement, clean-shaven and clear-eyed, adapting himself without need of instruction to the details of his new surroundings. A less complacent person than Armand might have been aware that, while he was taking stock of Arsène, Arsène was taking stock, with equal particularity, of him. And there was an unpleasant slyness

in his black eyes, a something akin to alertness in his thin nostrils, which moved like those of a rabbit, and seemed to accomplish more than their normal share of conveying to their owner's intelligence an impression of exterior things. Also, had Monsieur Michel but observed it, his new servant walked just a trifle *too* softly, and his hands were just a trifle *too* white and slender. Moreover, he had a habit of smiling to himself when his back was turned, which is an undesirable thing in anybody, and approaches the ominous in a valet-maître d'hôtel. But Monsieur Michel was far too much of an aristocrat to have any doubt of his power to overawe and impress his inferiors, or to see in the newcomer's excessive inconspicuity anything more than a commendable recognition of monsieur's commanding presence. So, when Arsène completed his work and had shut the door noiselessly behind him, his master rubbed his hands and said "Ter-rès bien!" in a low voice, this being his superlative expression of satisfaction. Had his glance been able to penetrate his salon door, it would have met, in the antichambre, with the astounding spectacle of his new servant in the act of toss-

ing monsieur's silk hat into the air, and catching it, with extreme dexterity, on the bridge of his nose. Unfortunately, the other side of the door is something which, like the future and the bank-accounts of our debtors, it is not given us to see. So Monsieur Michel repeated his "Ter-rès bien !" and fell again to contemplating his Titian.

Yes, undoubtedly, it had been a great stroke of diplomacy. The young Marchese degli Abbraccioli was not conspicuous for his command of ready money, but his father had left him the finest private collection of paintings in Rome, and this, in consequence of chronic financial stress, was gradually passing from the walls of his palazzo in the via Cavour into the possession of an appreciative but none too extravagant government. It had been an inspiration, this proposal of Monsieur Michel's to settle his claim upon the Marchese for his overwhelming losses at baccarat by taking over one of the two Titians which flanked the chimney-piece in his study. The young Italian had assented eagerly, and had supplemented his acquiescence with a proposal to dispose of the pendant for somewhat more material remuneration.

ation than canceled reconnaissances. But Armand Michel had undertaken it before, this delicate task of getting objets d'art over the Italian frontier — yes, and been caught in the act, too, and forced to disgorge. For the moment, it was enough to charge himself with one picture, on the given conditions, without risking hard cash in the experiment. Later — well, later, one would see. And so, *a rivederla, mio caro marchese*.

Monsieur Michel fairly hugged himself as he thought of his success. Mon Dieu, quelle génie, that false bottom to his trunk! He had come safely through them all, the imbecile inspectors, and now his treasure hung fairly and finally upon his wall, smiling at him out of its tapestry surroundings. It was épatant, truly, and moreover, all there was of the most calé. Only one small cloud of regret hung upon the broad blue firmament of his satisfaction — the other picture! It had been so easy. He might as well have had two as one. And now, without doubt, the imbecile Marchese would sell the pendant to the imbecile government, and that would be the end of it so far as private purchase was concerned. Monsieur Mi

chel rose from his chair with a gesture of impatience, and, drawing the curtain back from the window, looked out lugubriously upon the March cheerlessness of the place Vendôme. Little by little, a most seductive plan formed itself in his mind. After all, why not? A couple of weeks at Monte Carlo, a week at Sorrento, and a fortnight at Rome, in which to win the Titian from the Marchese degli Abbraccioli, by baccarat if possible, or by bank-notes should fortune prove unkind. It was the simplest thing in the world, and he would avoid the remainder of the wet weather and be back for the opening of Longchamp. And Monsieur Michel rubbed his hands and said "Ter-rès bien!" again, with much emphasis.

When, a week later, Arsène was informed of Monsieur's intention to leave him in sole charge of his apartment for a time, he received the intelligence with the dignified composure of one who feels himself worthy of the confidence reposed in him. The cook was to have the vacation for which she had been clamoring, that she might display to her relatives in Lille the elaborate wardrobe which was the result of her savings during three years in Monsieur

Michel's employ. Perfectly. And the apartment was to be aired and dusted daily, as if monsieur himself were there. And visitors to be told that monsieur was returning in a month. And letters to be made to follow monsieur, to Monte Carlo at first, and then to Rome. But perfectly; it was completely understood. Arsène bowed a number of times in succession, and outwardly was as calm as a tall, candid-faced clock, being wound up to run for a specified time independent of supervision. But beneath that smooth and carefully oiled expanse of jet-black hair a whole colony of the most fantastic ideas suddenly aroused themselves and began to elbow each other about in a veritable tumult.

Monsieur Michel took his departure in a whirl of confusion, losing a quantity of indispensable articles with exclamations of despair, and finding them the next moment with cries of satisfaction. Eugénie, the cook, compactly laced into a traveling dress of blue silk, stood at the doorway to bid her master good-by, and was run into at each instant by the cabman or the concierge or Monsieur Michel himself, each of whom covered, at top speed, several kilo-



metres of stair and hallway, in the stupendous task of transferring a trunk, a valise, a hat-box, a shawl-strap, and an umbrella from the apartment to the carriage below. On the surface of this uproar, the presence of Arsène swam as serenely as a swan on a maelstrom. He accompanied his master to the gare de Lyon, and the last object which met the anxious eyes of Monsieur Michel, peering out from one of the first-class carriages of the departing express, was his new servant, standing upon the platform, as unmoved by the events of the morning as if monsieur had been passing from the dining room to take coffee in the salon instead of from Paris to take breakfast in Marseille. The sight of him was intensely soothing to the fevered spirit of Monsieur Michel, on whom the details of such a departure produced much the same effect as do cakes of soap when tossed into the mouth of an active geyser.

"He is calm," he said to himself, rubbing his hands. "He is very calm, and he will not lose his head while I am gone. *Ter-rès bien !*"

But the calm of Arsène was the calm of thin

ice over swiftly rushing waters. As the polished buffers of the last carriage swung out of sight around the curve with a curiously furtive effect, like the eyes of an alarmed animal, slipping backward into its burrow, he clenched the fingers of his right hand, and slipping his thumb nail under the edge of his upper teeth, drew it forward with a sharp click. At the same time he said something to his vanished master in the second person singular, which is far from being the address of affection on the lips of a valet-maître d'hôtel.

Wheeling suddenly after this singular manifestation, Monsieur Sigard found himself the object of close and seemingly amused scrutiny on the part of an individual standing directly behind him. There was something so extremely disconcerting in this gentleman's unexpected proximity, and in his very evident enjoyment of the situation, that Arsène was upon the point of turning abruptly away, when the other addressed him, speaking the colloquial French of their class, with the slightest possible hint of foreign accent.

"Bah, vieux ! Is it that I do not know what they are, the patrons ? Oh, làlà !"

“Avec ça! There are some who have it, an astounding audacity!” said Arsène to the air over the stranger’s head.

“Farceur!” replied the stranger, to the air over Arsène’s. And then —

“There are two parrakeets that have need of plucking across the way,” he added, reflectively.

“There are two empty sacks here to put the feathers in,” answered Arsène, with alacrity; and ten minutes later, oblivious to the chill damp of the March morning, Monsieur Sigard and his new-found acquaintance, seated at a little table in front of a near-by wine-shop, were preparing in company the smoky-green mixture of absinthe and water which Paris slang has dubbed a parrakeet. On the part of Arsène the operation was performed with elaborate solicitude, and as he poured a tiny stream of water over the lump of sugar on the flat spoon balanced deftly across the glass, he held his head tipped sidewise and his left eye closed, in the manner of a contemplative fowl, and was oblivious to all but the delectable business of the moment.

But his companion, while apparently deeply

engaged in the preparation of his own beverage, was far from being wholly preoccupied thereby. He was a man shorter by an inch or two than Monsieur Michel's maître d'hôtel, dressed in the most inconspicuous fashion, and with an air of avoiding any emphasis of voice or gesture which would be apt to attract more than casual attention to the circumstance of his existence. There was something about him vaguely suggestive of a chameleon, an instant harmonizing of his appearance and manner with any background whatsoever against which he chanced to find himself placed, and a curious clouding of his eyes when unexpectedly they were met by those of another, which lent him an immediate air of profound stupidity. No doubt his long practice in this habit of self-obliteration made him doubly appreciative of Arsène's little outburst of ill-feeling on the platform of the gare de Lyon. A man who would do that in public — well, he had much to learn !

Just now, however, this gentleman's eyes were very bright, though they had dwindled to mere slits ; and he followed every movement of the unconscious Arsène with short, swift glances

from beneath his drooping lids, as, bit by bit, the lumps of sugar melted under the steady drip of the trickling water, and the opalescent mixture mounted toward the brims. He knew but two varieties of absinthe drinker, this observant individual, — the one who progressed, under its influence, from cheerful candor to shrewdest insight into the motives of others, and most skilful evasion of their toils; the other whom, by easy stages, it led from obstinate reserve to the extreme of careless garrulity. At this moment he was on the alert for symptoms.

Arsène looked up suddenly as the last morsel of his sugar melted, and, lifting his glass, dipped it before the eyes of his new friend.

“To your health, — Monsieur — ?” he said, in courteous interrogation.

“Fresque,” said the other.

“Bon! And I, Monsieur Fresque, am Sigard, Arsène Sigard, maître d’hôtel, at your service, of the type who has just taken himself off, down there.”

And he indicated the imposing pile of the gare de Lyon with his thumb, and then, closing his eyes, took a long sip of his absinthe,

and replacing the glass upon the table, plunged his hands into his pockets and stared off gloomily toward the Seine.

"Poof!" he said, "but I am content that he is gone. What a filthiness, a rich man — what?"

"Not to be denied," agreed Monsieur Fresque. "There is not a foreign sou's worth of delicacy in the whole lot!"

"Mazette! I believe thee," answered the other, much pleased. Fresque's thin lips relaxed the veriest trifle at the familiarity, and he lit a cigarette and gazed vacantly into space.

"But what dost thou expect?" he observed, with calm philosophy.

It appeared that what Arsène expected was that honest folk should not work from seven to ten, in an ignoble box of a pantry, on boots, and silver, and what not, he demanded of him, name of a pipe! and dust, and sweep, and serve at table, good heaven! and practice a species of disgusting politeness to a type of old engraving like Monsieur Armand Michel. And all, oh, mon Dieu! for the crushing sum of twenty dollars a month, did he compre-

hend? while the animal in question was sowing his yellow buttons by fistfuls. Mazette! Evidently, he himself was not an eagle. He did not demand the Louvre to live in, for example, nor the existence *lalala* of Emile Loubet — what? but it was not amusing, he assured him, to be in the employ of the great revolting one in question. Ah, non!

“Eiffellesque!” succinctly commented Monsieur Fresque.

But, said Arsène, there was another side to the question, and he himself, it went without saying, was no waffle-iron, speaking of stupidity. He had not been present the day fools were distributed. Oh, far from that! In consequence, it was to become hump-backed with mirth, that part of his life passed behind the back of the example of an old Sophie whom he had the honor to serve. He had not forgotten how to juggle since he traveled with a band of mountebanks. And there were the patron’s plates, — at one hundred francs the piece, good blood! Also he smoked the ancient cantaloupe’s cigarettes, and as for the wines — *tchutt!* Arsène kissed his finger-tips and took a long sip of absinthe.

“He is gone for long?” inquired Fresque.

Ah, that! Who knew? Six weeks at least. And meanwhile might not a brave lad amuse himself in the empty apartment — eh? Oh, it would be life in a gondola, name of a name of a name!

The conversation was prolonged for an hour, Arsène growing more and more confidential under the seductive influence of his parrakeet, and his companion showing himself so heartily in accord with his spirit of license, that, by degrees, he captured completely the fancy of the volatile valet, and was permitted to take his departure only on the condition of presenting himself in the place Vendôme that evening for the purpose of smoking the cantaloupe’s cigarettes and seeing Arsène juggle with the hundred-franc plates.

Monsieur Fresque was as good as his word. He put in an appearance promptly at eight o’clock, hung his hat and coat, at his host’s invitation, on a Louis Quinze applique, and made himself comfortable in a chaise longue which — on the guarantee of Duveen — had once belonged to the Pompadour. Arsène outdid himself in juggling, and afterwards they



cracked a bottle of Château Laffitte and drank it with great satisfaction out of Salviati glasses, topping off the entertainment with Russian kummel and two of Monsieur Michel's cigars. Arsène, in his picturesque idiom, expressed himself as being tapped in the eye with his new friend to the extent of being able to quit him no longer, and forthwith Monsieur Hercule Fresque took up his quarters in the bedroom of the cantaloupe, his host established himself in Monsieur Michel's Empire guest chamber, and the "life in a gondola" went forward for five weeks to the supreme contentment of both parties.

Now it is a peculiarity of life in a gondola, as is known to all who have sampled its delights, that, while it lasts, consideration of past and future alike becomes dulled, and one loses all sense of responsibility in the lethal torpor of the present. So it was not until Arsène received a letter from Monsieur Michel, announcing his return, that he began to figure up the possible consequences of his experiment. They were, as he gloomily announced to Hercule, stupefying to the extent of dashing out one's brains against the wall. But one bottle of

Château Laffitte remained, and none whatever of Russian kümmel. Moreover, the brocade of the chaise longue was hopelessly ruined by the boots of the conspirators, and the enthusiasm of Arsène's juggling had reduced by fifty per cent. the set of Sèvres plates. What was to be done, bon Dieu, what *was* to be done?

Monsieur Fresque, having carefully perused a letter with an Italian stamp, which had come by the evening mail, revolved the situation in his mind, slowly smoking the last of the cantaloupe's cigars, and glancing from time to time at the despondent figure of his host, with his eyes narrowed to mere slits. Had the fish been sufficiently played? He reeled in a foot or so of line by way of experiment.

"What, after all, is a situation?" he said. "Thou wilt be discharged, yes. But afterwards? Pah! thou wilt find another. And thou hast thy rigolade."

"Ah, that!" replied Arsène with a shrug. "I believe thee! But thinkest thou my old melon will find himself in the way of glueing the ribbon of the Légion on me for what I have done? I see myself from here, playing the harp on the bars of La Maz!"

"La vie à Mazas, c'est pas la vie en gondole," observed Hercule philosophically.

"Tu parles !"

Hercule appeared to take a sudden resolve. He swung his feet to the floor, and bending forward in the chaise longue, began to speak rapidly and with extreme earnestness.

"Voyons, donc, mon gars, thou hast been foolish, but one must not despair. What is done in France is never known in Italy. And here thou art surrounded by such treasures as the imbeciles of foreigners pay fortunes for, below there. Take what thou hast need of, — a trunk of the patron's, some silver, what thou canst lay hands on of gold and brass and enamel, whatever will not break — and get away before he returns. In Milan thou canst sell it all, and get another place. I have friends there, and thou shalt have letters. Voilà !"

"But one must have money," replied Arsène, brightening, nevertheless. "And that is lacking me."

Hercule seemed to ponder this objection deeply. Finally, with a sigh of resignation, he spoke again.

“ B'en, voilà ! Thou hast been my friend, is it not so ? Hercule Fresque is not the man to be ungrateful. I am poor, and have need of my little savings — But, there ! it is for a friend — pas ? Let us say no more ! ” And he thrust a roll of banknotes into the hands of the stupefied Arsène.

The evening was spent in arranging the details of the flight. Arsène produced a serviceable trunk from the storeroom, and in this the two men placed a great variety of the treasures which Monsieur Michel had accumulated during twenty years of patient search and exorbitant purchase. Squares of priceless tapestry, jeweled watches and snuff boxes, figurines of old Sèvres, ivories cunningly carved and yellow with age, madonnas of box-wood, and wax, and ebony, — all were carefully wrapped in newspapers and stowed away ; and to these Arsène added a dozen of his master's shirts, two suits of clothes, and a box of cigarettes. But when all the available material had been appropriated there yet remained an empty space below the tray. It would never do to have the treasures knocking about on the way. Arsène proposed a blanket — or, better

yet, one of Monsieur Michel's overcoats. But Hercule, after rearranging the trunk so as to make the empty space of different form, turned suddenly to his companion, who was picking nervously at his fingers and watching the so fruitful source of suggestion with a pathetic air of entreaty, and clapped him gleefully upon the chest.

"A painting!" he exclaimed.

Complete demoralization seemed to have taken possession of Arsène. He was very pale, and his eyes constantly sought the salon door as if he expected the object of his ingenious epithets to burst in at any moment, with the prefect and all his legions at his heels.

"A painting?" he repeated blankly; "but how, a painting?"

But Monsieur Fresque had already mounted nimbly on a chair and lifted the cherished Titian of Monsieur Michel from its place against the tapestry. There was no further need of persuasion. The moment had come for action; and, seizing a hammer, he began to wrench off the frame, talking rapidly between short gasps of exertion.

"But certainly, a painting. This one is

small — ugh ! — but who can say how valuable ? They sell readily down there, these black daubs. Ah ! By rolling, it will fill the empty space, seest thou, and later it may mean a thousand francs. One does not do things by — umph ! — by halves in such a case. Sacred nails ! One would say they had been driven in for eternity ! Oof ! Thou art fortunate to have me to advise thee, great imbecile. Mayhap this is worth all the rest. Pig of a frame, va ! It is of iron. Ugh ! He will be furious, thy patron, but what of that ? In Italy thou wilt hear no more of it. Still one nail. Come away, then, type of a cow ! Enfin ! ”

With one final effort he tore off the last fragment of frame, peeled the canvas from the back-board, and, rolling it carefully, tucked it into the empty space, replaced the tray, and closed the trunk with a snap.

“Voilà ! ” he said, straightening himself and turning a red but triumphant face to the astounded maître d’hôtel.

“Now for the letters,” he added, seating himself at Monsieur Michel’s desk and beginning to scribble busily. “Do thou go for a cab, and at a gallop. It has struck half past

ten and the Bâle rapide leaves the gare de l'Est at midnight."

Hardly had the door of the apartment closed upon the demoralized valet when Monsieur Fresque hastily shoved to one side the note he had begun, and, writing a sentence or two upon another slip of paper, wrapped the latter about a two-sou piece, and went quietly to the salon window. Opening this cautiously, he found a fine rain falling outside, and the eastern half of the square deserted save for two figures, — one the flying form of Arsène, cutting across a corner into the rue Castiglione in search of a cab, and the other that of a man muffled in a heavy overcoat and with a slouch hat pulled well over his eyes, who was lounging against the railing of the Column, and who, as Fresque opened the window, shook himself into activity and stepped nimbly out across the wide driveway. Hercule placed the paper containing the two-sou piece upon the window sill and with a sharp flick of his forefinger sent it spinning down into the square. The man in the slouch hat stooped for an instant in passing the spot where it lay, and Monsieur Fresque, softly closing the window,

stretched his arms upward into a semblance of a gigantic letter Y, and indulged in a prodigious yawn.

“Ça y est !” said he.

Papa Brigette had long since climbed into his high bedstead, in the loge de concierge, when, for the second time in fifteen minutes, he was aroused by the voice of Arsène calling, “Cordon, s’il vous plaît !” in the main hallway, and, reaching from under his feather coverlid, pressed the bulb which unlocked the street-door.

“Quel coureur, que ce gars !” grumbled the worthy man to his fat spouse, snoring complacently at his side. “I deceive myself if, when Monsieur Michel returns, thou dost not hear a different story.”

“Aw-r-r-r !” replied Maman Brigette.

On the way to the gare de l’Est Arsène recovered the better part of his lost composure, and listened with something akin to cheerfulness to the optimistic prognostications of his companion. By the time the precious trunk was registered and he had secured his seat in a second-class compartment of the Bâle rapide, he was once more in high feather and profuse



in expressions of gratitude, as he smoked a farewell cigarette with Fresque while waiting for the train to start.

"Thou canst believe me, *mon vieux*," he protested. "It is not a little thing that thou hast done, name of a name. Ah, non! It was the act of a brave comrade, that I assure thee. Et voyons! When I have sold the effects down there, thou shalt have back thy little paper mattress, word of honor! Yes, and more — thy share of the gain, *mon zig*!"

He grasped the other's hand fervently as a passing guard threw them a curt "*En voiture, messieurs!*" and seemed on the point of kissing him farewell. There was some confusion attendant upon his entering the compartment, owing to the excessive haste of a man muffled in a heavy overcoat and with a slouch hat pulled well over his eyes, who arrived at the last moment and persisted in scrambling in, at the very instant chosen by Monsieur Sigard. The latter immediately reappeared at the window, and, as the train began to move, shouted a few final acknowledgments at his benefactor.

"B'en, au r'voir, vieux! And I will write thee from below there, thou knowest. A thou-

sand thanks. Fear not for thy blue paper — what? Thou shalt have it back, sou for sou, name of a name!”

He was almost out of hearing now, his face a cream-colored splotch against the deep maroon of the railway carriage, and, drawing out a gaudy handkerchief, he waved it several times in token of farewell.

“I shall never forget thee, never!” he cried, as a kind of afterthought and valedictory in one.

“Ah, ça!” said Monsieur Fresque to himself, as Arsène’s face went out of sight, “*that* I well believe!”

Yet, so inconstant is man, the promised letter from “below there” never reached him. Another did, however, and it was this which he might have been observed reading to a friend, with every evidence of the liveliest satisfaction, one week later, at a rear table before the Taverne Royale. One would hardly have recognized the plainly, almost shabbily dressed comrade of Arsène, with his retiring manners and his furtive eyes, in this extremely prosperous individual, in polished top hat, white waistcoat and gaiters, and gloves of lemon yellow.

His companion was equally imposing in appearance, and it was apparent that he derived as much amusement from listening to Monsieur Fresque's epistle as did the latter from reading it aloud, which he did with the most elaborate emphasis, calling the other's attention to certain sentences by tapping him lightly upon the arm and repeating them more slowly.

The letter was in Italian, and ran as follows :—

MILAN, *April 20, 1901.*

MY GOOD ERCOLE, — I am leaving here to-day for Rome, where the case of the government against the Marchese degli Abbraccioli is to come on next week, but before I do so I must write you of the last act in the little comedy of Arsène Sigard. I never lost sight of him from the moment we left Paris, and when he found I was also on my way to Italy, he became confidential, and, in exchange for certain information which I was able to give him about Milan, etc., told me a long story about himself and his affairs, which I found none the less amusing for knowing it to be a tissue of lies. The time passed readily enough, but I was relieved when we started over the St. Go-

thard, because I knew then that the game was as good as played. We arrived at Chiasso on time (two o'clock) and I found Sassevero on the platform when I jumped out. He had come on from Rome the night before, and was in a positive panic because Palmi, who had been watching old Michel there, had lost him somehow and nobody knew where he'd gone. He might have come through on any train, of course, and Sassevero did n't even know him by sight.

Naturally, our little business with Sigard was soon done. Cagliacci is still chief of customs at Chiasso, and he simply confiscated the trunk and everything in it, though, of course, the government was n't after anything but the picture. There were two hours of argument over the disposition of Sigard, but it seemed best to let him go and nothing further said, which he was only too glad to do. The Old Man is shy of diplomatic complications, it appears, and he had told Sassevero to frighten the chap thoroughly and then let him slip off.

Here comes in the most remarkable part of all. Just as Sigard was marching out of the room, in came the Lucerne express, and our

friend walks almost into the arms of an oldish gentleman who had jumped out of a carriage and was hurrying into the customs room.

"Bon Dieu!" said this individual, "what does *this* mean?"

"What does what mean?" put in Sassevero like a flash, and the other was so taken by surprise that, before he had time to think what he was saying, the secret was out.

"That's my valet de chambre!" he said.

"Really?" said Sassevero. "Bravo! Then you're the gentleman with the Marchese degli Abbraccioli's second Titian in the false bottom of his trunk!"

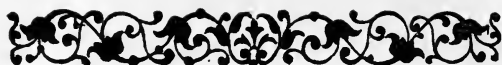
Could anything have been more exquisite? The old chap is out some hundred thousand lire on the transaction, because, of course, Cagliacci confiscated it like the other. It was a sight to remember,—the two pictures side by side in his room, and Michel and Sigard cursing each other above them! We all went on to Milan by the next train, except Sigard, who did the prudent thing on the appearance of his padrone, and disappeared, but Michel's appeal to the French consulate was of no effect. The consul told him flat that he was

going directly against the law in trying to get old works of art over the frontier, and that he could n't plead ignorance after the detail of the false bottom.

Sassevero says the Old Man is immensely pleased with the way you handled your end of the affair. The funny part of it is that Sigard apparently had n't the most remote suspicion of your being in any way involved in his catastrophe.

Your most devoted,

CAVALETTO.



# Little Tapin

**H**IS name was Jean-Marie-Michel Jumièrè, and the first eighteen years of his life were spent near the little Breton village of Plougastel. They were years of which each was, in every respect, like that which went before, and, in every respect, like that which followed after : years, that is to say, devoid of incident, beyond the annual pardon, when the peasants came from far and near to the quaint little church, to offer their prayers at the cemetery Calvary, and display their holiday costumes, and make love, and exchange gossip on

the turf round about. It is a land of wide and wind-swept hillsides, this, imbued with the strange melancholy of a wild and merciless sea, and wherein there are no barriers of convention or artificiality between earth and sky, man and his Maker; but Jean-Marie loved it for its very bleakness. From the doorway of his mother's cottage, standing, primly white, in the midst of great rocks and strawberry fields, with its thatched roof drawn down, like a hood, about its ears, as if in protection against the western gales, he could look out across the broad harbor of Brest to the Goulet, the gateway to that great Atlantic whose mighty voice came to his ears in stormy weather, muttering against the barrier of the shore. And this voice of the sea spoke to Jean-Marie of many things, but, most of all, of the navies of France, of the mighty battleships which went out from Brest to unimagined lands, far distant, China, America, and the southern islands, whence comrades, older than himself, brought back curious treasures, coral, and shells, and coins, and even parrots, to surprise the good people of Plougastel. He looked at them enviously, as they gathered about the door of Père Yvetot's



wine-shop, when they were home on leave, and spun sailor yarns for his delighted ears. How wonderful they were, these men who had seen the world, — Toulon, and Marseille, and Tonkin, — how wonderful, with their wide, flapping trousers, and their jaunty caps, with a white strap and a red pompon, and their throats and breasts, showing ruddy bronze at the necks of their shirts !

At such times Jean-Marie would join timidly in the talk, and, perhaps, speak of the time when he, too, should be marin français, and see the world. And the big Breton sailors would laugh good-naturedly, and slap him on the shoulder, and say : “Tiens ! And how then shall the cruisers find their way into Brest harbor, when the little phare is gone ?” For it was a famous joke in Plougastel to pretend that Jean-Marie, with his flaming red hair, was a lighthouse, which could be seen through the Goulet, far, far out at sea.

But Jean-Marie only smiled quietly in reply, for he knew that his day would come. At night, the west wind, sweeping in from the Atlantic, and rattling his little casement, seemed to be calling him, and it was a fancy of his to

answer its summons in a whisper, turning his face toward the window.

“All in good time, my friend. All in good time !”

Again, when he was working in the strawberry fields, he would strain his eyes to catch the outline of some big green battleship, anchored off Brest, or, during one of his rare visits to the town, lean upon the railing of the pont tournant, to watch the sailors and marines moving about the barracks and magazines on the quais of the porte militaire. All in good time, my friends ; all in good time !

Only, there were two to whom one did not speak of these things, — the Little Mother, and Rosalie Vivieu. Already the sea had taken three from Madame Jumièrè — Baptiste, her husband, and Philippe and Yves, the older boys, who went out together, with the fishing fleet, seven years before, in the staunch little smack *La Belle Fortune*. She had been cheerful, even merry, during the long weeks of waiting for the fleet's return, and, when it came in one evening, with news of *La Belle Fortune* cut down in the fog by a North Cape German Lloyd, and all hands lost, she had taken the

news as only a Breton woman can. Jean-Marie was but twelve at the time, but there is an intuition, beyond all reckoning in years, in the heart of a fisher's son, and never should he forget how the Little Mother had caught him to her heart that night, at the doorway of their cottage, crying, "Holy Saviour! Holy Saviour!" with her patient blue eyes upturned to the cold, grey sky of Finistère! As for Rosalie, Jean-Marie could not remember when they two had not been sweethearts, since the day when, as a round-eyed boy of six, he had watched Madame Vivieu crowding morsels of blessed bread into her baby mouth at the pardon of Plougastel, since all the world knows that in such manner only can backwardness of speech be cured. Rosalie was sixteen now, as round, and pink, and sweet as one of her own late peaches, and she had promised to marry Jean-Marie some day. For the time being, he was allowed to kiss her only on the great occasion of the pardon, but that was once more each year than any other gars in Plougastel could do, so Jean-Marie was content. No, evidently, to these two there must be no mention of his dreamings of the wide and wonderful

sea, of the summons of the impatient western wind, of those long reveries upon the pont tournant.

So Jean-Marie hugged his visions to his heart for another year, working in the strawberry fields, gazing out with longing eyes toward the warships in the harbor, and whispering, when the fingers of the wind tapped upon his little casement: "All in good time, my friend. All in good time!"

And his day came at last, as he had known it would. But with what a difference! For there were many for the navy that spring. Plougastel had nine, and Daoulas fifteen ready, and Hanvec seven, and Crozon twenty-one, and from Landerneau, and Châteaulin, and Lambezellec, and le Folgoet came fifty more, and from Brest itself, a hundred; and all of these, with few exceptions, were great, broad-shouldered lads, strong of arm and deep of chest, and so the few who were slender and fragile, like Jean-Marie, were assigned to the infantry, and sent, as is the custom, far from Finistère, because, says the code, change of scene prevents homesickness, and what the code says must, of course, be true.

When Madame Jumièrè heard this she smiled as she was seldom known to smile. The Holy Virgin, then, had listened to her prayers. The gars was to be a piou-piou instead of a col bleu, after all! The great sea should not rob her again, as it had robbed her in the time. It was very well, oh, grace au saint Sauveur, it was very well! And, all that night, the Little Mother prayed, and watched a tiny taper, flickering before her porcelain image of Notre Dame de la Recouvrance, while Jean-Marie tossed and turned upon his little garret bed, and made no reply, even in a whisper, to the west wind, rattling his casement with insistent fingers.

But it was all far worse than he had pictured it to himself, even in those first few hours of disappointment and despair. The last Sunday afternoon which he and Rosalie passed, hand in hand, seated by the Calvary in Plougastel cemetery, striving dumbly to realize that they should see each other no more for three long years; the following morning, chill and bleak for that time of year, when he and the Little Mother, standing on the platform of the station at Brest, could barely see each others'

faces, for the sea-fog and their own hot tears ; the shouts and laughter and noisy farewells of the classe, crowding out of the windows of their third-class carriages ; and, finally, the interminable journey to Paris, — all of these were to Jean-Marie like the successive stages of a feverish, uneasy dream. He knew none of the noisy Breton peasant lads about him, but sat by himself in the centre of the compartment, too far from either window to catch more than fleeting glimpses of the fog-wrapped landscape through which the train crept at thirty kilometres the hour. At long intervals, they stopped in great stations, of which little Jean-Marie remembered to have heard, — Morlaix, St. Brieuc, Rennes, and Laval, where the recruits bought cakes and bottles of cheap wine, and joked with white-capped peasant women on the platforms ; and twice during the long night he was roused from a fitful, troubled sleep to a consciousness of raucous voices crying “ Le Mans ! ” and “ Chartres ! ” and gasped in sudden terror — before he could remember where he was — at the faces of his slumbering companions, ghastly and distorted in the wretched light of the compartment lamp. So,

as the dawn was breaking over Paris, they came into the gare Montparnasse, and, too drowsy to realize what was demanded of them, were herded together by the drill sergeants in charge, and marched away across the city to the barracks of La Pépinière.

The weeks that followed were to Jean-Marie hideous beyond any means of expression. From the first he had been assigned to the drum-corps, and spent hours daily, under command of a corporal expert in the art, laboriously learning double rolls and ruffles in the fosse of the fortifications. For they are not in the way of enduring martyrdom, the Parisians, and even while they cry "Vive l'armée!" with their hats off, and their eyes blazing, the drummers and buglers are sent out of hearing, to practice the music that later, when the regiments parade, will stir the patriotism of the throng.

But this part of his new life was no hardship to Jean-Marie, or Little Tapin, as his comrades soon learned to call him, because he was the smallest drummer in the corps. On the contrary, it was something to be in the open air, even though that air was tainted with sluggish

smoke from the factory chimneys of Levallois-Perret, instead of being swept and refreshed by the west wind from beyond the Goulet. And he was very earnest, very anxious to please, was Little Tapin. First of all the new drummers, he learned the intricacies of the roll, and so diligently did he improve the hours of practice that he was first, as well, to be regularly assigned to a place in the regimental band. No, this was no hardship. What cramped and crushed his kindly little heart, what clouded his queer, quizzical eyes, was nothing less than Paris, beautiful, careless Paris, that laughed, and danced, and sang about him, and had never a thought for Little Tapin, with his funny, freckled face, and his ill-fitting uniform of red and blue, and his coarse boots, and his ineradicable Breton stare.

In Plougastel he had been wont to greet and to be greeted, to hear cheery words from those who passed him on the wide, white roads. He was part of it all, one who was called by his honest name, instead of by a ridiculous sobriquet, and who had his share in all that went forward, from the strawberry harvest to the procession of the pardon. And if all this was



but neighborly interest, at least there were two to whom Jean-Marie meant more, and who meant more to him.

But Paris, — Paris, with her throngs of strange faces hurrying past, her brilliantly lighted boulevards, her crowded cafés, her swirl of traffic along avenues that one crossed only at peril of one's life, — he was lost amid her clamor and confusion as utterly as a bubble in a whirlpool! The bitterest hours of his new life were those of his leave, in which, with a band of his fellows, he went out of the great green gates of the caserne to seek amusement. Amusement! They soon lost Little Tapin, the others, for he was one who did not drink, and who walked straight on when they turned to speak to passing grisettes, who clung to each others' arms, and looked back, laughing at the sallies of the pious-pious. He was not bon camarade. He seemed to disapprove. So, presently, while he was staring into a shop window, they would slip down a side street, or into a tiny café, and Little Tapin would find himself alone in the great city which he dreaded.

He came to spending long hours of his leave

in the galleries of the Louvre, hastening past row upon row of nude statues with startled eyes, or making his way wearily from picture to picture of the old Dutch masters, striving, striving to understand. Then, footsore and heartsick, he would creep out upon the pont du Carrousel, and stand for half an afternoon, with his elbows on the railing. Behind him, the human tide swung back and forward from bank to bank, the big omnibuses making the bridge throb and sway under his feet. It was good, that, like the rise and fall of his little boat on the swells of the bras de Landerneau, when he rowed up with a comrade to fish at the mouth of the Elorn. And there was always the Seine, whirling, brown and angry, under the arches of the pont Royal beyond, on its way to the sea, where were the great, green battleships. Little Tapin strained his eyes in an attempt to follow the river's long sweep to the left, toward the distant towers of the Trocadéro, and then pictured to himself how it would go on and on, out into the good, green country, past hillsides crowded with vineyards, and broad, flat meadows, where the poplars stood, aligned like soldiers, against the sky, until it broadened

toward its end, running swifter and more joyously, for now the wind had met it and was crying, "Come! Come! The Sea! The Sea!" as it was used to cry, rattling the casement of his little room at Plougastel. Then two great tears ran slowly down his freckled cheeks, and dropped, unnoted, into the flying river, wherein so many fall. Ah, what a baby he was, to be sure, Little Tapin!

So three months went by, and then one morning the news ran through La Pépinière that the regiment was going to move. There is no telling how such tidings get abroad, for the pawns are not supposed to know what part in the game they are to play. A loose-tongued lieutenant, perhaps, and a sharp-eared ordonnance, or a word between two commandants overheard by the sentry in his box at the gates of the caserne. Whatever the source of information, certain it was that, six hours after the colonel of the 107th of the line had received his orders, his newest recruit could have told you as much of them as was known to General de Galliffet himself, in his office on the boulevard St. Germain.

A more than usually friendly comrade con-

fided the news to Little Tapin, exulting. The regiment was to move — in three days, name of God! Epatant — what? And, what was more, they were to go to the south, to Grenoble, whence one saw the Alpes Maritimes, with snow upon them — snow upon them, did Tapin comprehend? — and always! No matter whether it was a Tuesday, or a Friday, — yes, or even a Sunday! There was *always* snow!

No, Little Tapin could hardly comprehend. He pondered dully upon this new development of his fate all that afternoon, and then, suddenly, while he was beating the staccato roll of the retraite in the court of the caserne that night, he understood! Why, it was to go further away, this, — further away from Plougastel, and the Little Mother, and Rosalie, to be stationed in God knew what great town, crueler, more crowded than even Paris herself!

All that night Little Tapin lay staring at the ceiling of the big dortoir, while the comrades breathed heavily around him. And, little by little, the spirit of rebellion roused and stirred in his simple Breton heart. For he hated it all, — this army, this dreary, rigid routine, this contemptuous comment of trim, sneering

young lieutenants, with waxed mustaches, and baggy red riding breeches, and immaculately varnished boots. He hated his own uniform, which another tapin had worn before him, and which, in consequence, had never even had the charm of freshness. He hated the bugles, and the drums, — yes, and, more than all, the tricolor, the flag of the great, cruel Republic which had cooped him up in these desolate barracks of La Pépinière, instead of sending him with other Bretons out to the arms of the blue sea! And, when gray morning crept through the windows of the dortoir, there lay upon the pallet of Little Tapin a deserter, in spirit, at least, from the 107th of the line!

That day, for the third time since joining the regiment, Little Tapin was detailed as drummer to the guard at the Palais du Louvre. He knew what *that* meant, — a long, insufferably tiresome day, with nothing to do save to idle about a doorway of the palace, opposite the place du Palais Royal, watching the throng of shoppers scurrying to and fro, and passing in and out of the big magasins du Louvre. It was only as sunset approached that the drummer of the guard detail had any duty to per-

form. Then he marched, all alone, with his drum slung on his hip, across the place du Carrousel, and down the wide central promenade of the Tuileries gardens, to the circular basin at their western end, where, on pleasant afternoons, the little Parisians — and some, too, of larger growth — manœuvred their miniature yachts, to the extreme vexation of the sluggish gold-fish. There, standing motionless, like a sketch by Edouard Detaille, he watched the sun creep lower, lower, behind the arc de l'Etoile, until it went out of sight, and then, turning, he marched back, drumming sturdily, to warn all who lingered in the gardens that the gates were about to close.

But they were not good for Little Tapin, those hours of idleness at the portals of the palace. It is the second busiest and most densely thronged spot in Paris, this : first the place de l'Opéra, and then the place du Palais Royal. And to Little Tapin's eyes, as he glanced up and down the rue de Rivoli, the great city seemed more careless, more cruel than ever, and bit by bit the rebellious impulse born in the dortoir grew stronger, more irresistible. His Breton mind was slow to action, but, once

set in a direction, it was obstinacy itself. He took no heed of consequences. If he realized at any stage of his meditation what the outcome of desertion must inevitably be, it was only to put the thought resolutely from him. Capture, court-martial, imprisonment, they were only names to him. What was real was that he should see Plougastel again, sit hand in hand with Rosalie, and refind his comrades, the wide, sunlit harbor, and the impatient western wind, for which his heart was aching. What was false and unbearable was longer service in an army that he loathed.

He arranged the details of escape in his mind, as he sat apart from his comrades of the guard, fingering the drum-cords. An hour's leave upon the morrow—certainly the tambour-major would grant him so much, if he said it was to bid his sister good-by; then, a change from his detested uniform to a cheap civile in the shop of some second-hand dealer in the Gobelins quarter; and, finally, a quick dash to the gare Montparnasse, when he should have learned the hour of his train, and so, away to Finistère. It sounded extremely simple, as all such plans do, when the wish is fa-

ther to the thought, and in his calculations he went no further than Plougastel. After that, one would see. So the long afternoon stole past.

At seven o'clock the lieutenant of the guard touched Little Tapin upon the shoulder, and, more by instinct than actual perception, he sprang to his feet and saluted.

"Voyons, mon petit," said the officer, not unkindly. "It is time thou wast off. Thou knowest thy duty—eh? There is no need of instructions?"

"Oh, ça me connaît, mon lieutenant," answered Little Tapin quaintly, and, presently, he was striding away to his post, under the arc de Triomphe, past the statues, and the flower-beds, and the dancing fountains, across the rue des Tuileries, and so into the wide, central promenade of the gardens beyond.

The old woman who sold cakes, and reglisse, and balloons to the children, was putting up the shutters of her little booth as he passed, and two others were piling wooden chairs in ungainly pyramids under the trees, though the gardens were still full of people, hurrying north and south on the transverse paths leading to



the rue de Rivoli or to the quai and the pont de Solférino. But, curiously enough, the open space around the western basin was almost deserted as Little Tapin took his position, facing the great grille.

The mid-August afternoon had been oppressively warm, and now a thin haze had risen from the wet wood pavement of the place de la Concorde, and hovered low, pink in the light of the setting sun. Directly before Little Tapin the obelisk raised its warning finger, and beyond, the Champs Elysées, thickly dotted with carriages, and half veiled by great splotches of ruddy-yellow dust, swept away in a long, upward curve toward the distant arc de l'Etoile.

But of all this Little Tapin saw nothing. He stood very still, with his back to the basin, where the fat goldfish went to and fro like lazy sentinels, on the watch for a possible belated little boy, with a pocket full of crumbs. He was still deep in his dream of Plougastel, so deep that he could almost smell the salt breeze rollicking in from the Goulet, and hear the chapel bell sending the Angelus out over the strawberry fields and the rock-dotted hillside.

After a minute, something — a teamster's shout, or the snap of a cocher's whip — roused him, and he glanced around with the same half-sensation of terror with which he had wakened in the night to hear the guards shouting "Le Mans!" and "Chartres!" Then the reality came back to him with a rush, and he grumbled to himself. Oh, it was all very well, the wonderful French army, all very well if one could have been a marshal or a general, or even a soldier of the line in time of war. There was a chance for glory, *bon sang*! But to be a drummer — a drummer one metre seventy in height, with flaming red hair and a freckled face — a drummer who was called Little Tapin; and to have, for one's most important duty, to drum the loungers out of a public garden! No, evidently he would desert.

"But why?" said a grave voice beside him.

Little Tapin was greatly startled. He had not thought he was saying the words aloud. And his fear increased when, on turning to see who had spoken, he found himself looking into the eyes of one who was evidently an officer, though his uniform was unfamiliar. He was plain-shaven and very short, almost as short,

indeed, as Little Tapin himself, but about him there was a something of dignity and command which could not fail of its effect. He wore a great black hat like a gendarme's, but without trimming, and a blue coat with a white plastron, the tails lined with scarlet, and the sleeves ending in red and white cuffs. White breeches, and knee-boots carefully polished, completed the uniform, and from over his right shoulder a broad band of crimson silk was drawn tightly across his breast. A short sword hung straight at his hip, and on his left breast were three orders on red ribbons, — a great star, with an eagle in the centre, backed by a sunburst studded with brilliants; another eagle, this one of white enamel, pendant from a jeweled crown, and a smaller star of enameled white and green, similar to the large one.

Little Tapin had barely mastered these details when the other spoke again.

“Why art thou thinking to desert?” he said.

“Monsieur is an officer?” faltered the drummer, — “a general, perhaps. Pardon, but I do not know the uniform.”

“A corporal, simply — a soldier of France, like thyself. Be not afraid, my little one. All

thou sayest shall be held in confidence. Tell me thy difficulties."

His voice was very kind, the kindest Little Tapin had heard in three long months, and suddenly the barrier of his Breton reserve gave and broke. The nervous strain had been too great. He must have sympathy and advice — yes, even though it meant confiding in a stranger and the possible discovery and failure of his dearly cherished plans.

"A soldier of France!" he exclaimed, impulsively. "Ah, monsieur, there you have all my difficulty. What a thing it is to be a soldier of France! And not even that, but a drummer, a drummer who is called Little Tapin because he is the smallest and weakest in the corps. To be taken from home, from the country he loves, from Brittany, and made to serve among men who despise him, who laugh at him, who avoid him in the hours of leave, because he is not bon camarade. To wear a uniform that has been already worn. To sleep in a dormitory where there are bêtes funestes. To have no friends. To know that he is not to see Plougastel, and the sweetheart, and the Little Mother for three years. Never to fight,

but, at best, to drum voyous out of a garden ! That, monsieur, is what it is to be a soldier of France ! ”

There were tears in Little Tapin's eyes now, but he was more angry than sad. The silence of months was broken, and the hoarded resentment and despair of his long martyrdom, once given rein, were not to be checked a second time. He threw back his narrow shoulders defiantly, and said a hideous thing : —

“ *Conspuez l'armée française !* ”

There was an instant's pause, and then the other leaned forward, and with one white-gloved hand touched Little Tapin on the eyes.

. . . . .  
Before them a great plain, sloping very gradually upward in all directions, like a vast, shallow amphitheatre, spread away in a long series of low terraces to where, in the dim distance, the peaks of a range of purple hills nicked and notched a sky of palest turquoise. From where they stood, upon a slight elevation, the details of even the farthest slopes seemed singularly clean-cut and distinct, — the groups of grey willows ; the poplars, standing stiffly in twos and threes ; the short silver reaches of a little

river, lying in the hollows where the land occasionally dipped ; at long intervals, a white-washed cottage, gleaming like a sail against this sea of green ; even, on the most distant swell of all, a herd of ruddy cattle, moving slowly up toward the crest, — each and all of these, although in merest miniature, as clear and vivid in form and color as if they had been the careful creations of a Claude Lorrain.

Directly before the knoll upon which they were stationed, a wide road, dazzling white in the sunlight, swept in a superb full curve from left to right, and on its further side the ground was covered with close-cropped turf, and completely empty for a distance of two hundred metres. But beyond ! Beyond, every hectare of the great semicircle was occupied by dense masses of cavalry, infantry, and artillery, regiment upon regiment, division upon division, corps upon corps, an innumerable multitude, motionless, as if carved out of many-colored marbles !

In some curious, unaccountable fashion, Little Tapin seemed to know all these by name. There, to the left, were the chasseurs à pied, their huge bearskins flecked with red and green

pompons, and their white cross-belts slashed like capital X's against the blue of their tunics ; there, beside them, the foot artillery, a long row of metal collar plates, like dots of gold, and gold trappings against dark blue ; to the right, the Garde Royale Hollandaise, in brilliant crimson and white ; in the centre, the infantry of the Guard, with tall, straight pompons, red above white, and square black shakos, trimmed with scarlet cord.

Close at hand, surrounding Little Tapin and his companion, were the most brilliant figures of the scene, and these, too, he seemed to know by name. None was missing. Prince Murat, in a cream-white uniform blazing with gold embroidery, and with a scarlet ribbon across his breast ; a group of marshals, Ney, Oudinot, Duroc, Macdonald, Augereau, and Soult, with their yellow sashes, and cocked hats laced with gold ; a score of generals, Larouche, Durosnel, Marmont, Letort, Henrion, Chasteller, and the rest, with white instead of gold upon their hats, — clean-shaven, severe of brow and lip-line, they stood without movement, their gauntleted hands upon their sword-hilts, gazing straight before them.

Little Tapin drew a deep breath.

Suddenly from somewhere came a short, sharp bugle note, and instantly the air was full of the sound of hoofs, and the ring of scabbards and stirrup-irons, and the wide white road before them alive with flying cavalry. Squadron after squadron, they thundered by: mounted chasseurs, with pendants of orange-colored cloth fluttering from their shakos, and plaits of powdered hair bobbing at their cheeks; Polish light horse, with metal sunbursts gleaming on their square-topped helmets, and crimson and white pennons snapping in the wind at the points of their lances; Old Guard cavalry, with curving helmets like Roman legionaries; Mamelukes, with full red trousers, white and scarlet turbans, strange standards of horsehair surmounted by the imperial eagle, brazen stirrups singularly fashioned, and horse trappings of silver with flying crimson tassels; Horse Chasseurs of the Guard, in hussar tunics and yellow breeches, their sabretaches swinging as they rode: and Red Lancers, in gay uniforms of green and scarlet. Like a whirlwind they went past, — each squadron, in turn, wheeling to the left, and coming to a halt in the open



---

space beyond the road, until the last lancer swept by.

A thick cloud of white dust, stirred into being by the flying horses, now hung between the army and the knoll, and through this one saw dimly the mounted band of the 20th Chasseurs, on gray stallions, occupying the centre of the line, and heard, what before had been drowned by the thunder of hoofs, the strains of "*Partant pour la Syrie.*"

Slowly, slowly, the dust cloud thinned and lifted, so slowly that it seemed as if it would never wholly clear. But, on a sudden, a sharp puff of wind sent it whirling off in arabesques to the left, and the whole plain lay revealed.

"*Bon Dieu!*" said Little Tapin.

The first rank of cavalry was stationed within a metre of the further border of the road, the line sweeping off to the left and right until details became indistinguishable. And beyond, reaching away in a solid mass, the vast host dwindled and dwindled, back to where the ascending slopes were broken by the distant willows and the reaches of the silver stream. With snowy white of breeches and plastrons, with lustre of scarlet velvet and gold lace, with

sparkle of helmet and cuirass, and dull black of bearskin and smoothly groomed flanks, the army blazed and glowed in the golden sunlight like a mosaic of a hundred thousand jewels. Silent, expectant, the legions flashed crimson, emerald, and sapphire, rolling away in broad swells of light and color, motionless save for a long, slow heave, as of the ocean, lying, vividly iridescent, under the last rays of the setting sun. Then, without warning, as if the touch of a magician's wand had roused the multitude to life, a myriad sabres swept twinkling from their scabbards, and, by tens of thousands, the guns of the infantry snapped with a sharp click to a present arms. The bugles sounded all along the line, the tricolors dipped until their golden fringes almost swept the ground, the troopers stood upright in their stirrups, their heads thrown back, their bronzed faces turned toward the knoll, their eyes blazing. And from the farthest slopes inward, like thunder that growls afar, and, coming nearer, swells into unbearable volume, a hoarse cry ran down the massed battalions and broke in a stupendous roar upon the shuddering air, —

“Vive l'empereur !”

. . . . .  
Little Tapin rubbed his eyes.

"I am ill," he murmured. "I have been faint. I seemed to see" —

"Thou hast seen," said the voice of his companion, very softly, very solemnly, — "thou hast seen simply what it is to be a soldier of France!"

His hand rested an instant on the drummer's shoulder, with the ghost of a caress.

"My little one," he added, tenderly, "forget not this. It matters nothing whether one is Emperor of the French or the smallest drummer of the corps, whom men call 'Little Tapin.' I, too, was called 'little' in the time — 'The Little Corporal' they called me, from Moscow to the Loire. But it is all the same. Chief of the army, drummer of the corps, on the field of battle, in the gardens of the Tuileries, routing the Prussians, or drumming out the *voyous*, — it is all the same, my little one, it is all the same. All that is necessary is to understand — to understand that it is all and always for *la belle France*. Empire or republic, in peace or war — what difference? It is still France, still the tricolor, still *l'armée française*."

He lifted his hat, and looked steadily up at the sky, where the first stars were shouldering their way into view.

“Vive la France !” he added. And on his lips the phrase was like a prayer.

Through the arc de l'Etoile the fading sunset looked back, as upon something it was loath to leave. Then Little Tapin flung back his head. There was a strange, new light in his eyes, and his breath came quickly, between parted lips. Without a word he swung upon his heels, slipped his drum into place, and marched steadily away, beating the long roll. Once, when he had gone a hundred metres, he looked back. The figure of the Little Corporal was still standing beside the basin, but now it was very thin and faint, like the dust clouds on the Champs Elysées. But, as the little drummer turned, it raised one hand to its forehead in salute.

Little Tapin stood motionless for an instant, and then he smiled, and, through the deepening twilight —

“Vive l'armée !” he shouted, shrilly. “Vive la France !”



